

NEW FIELDS

For the WRITER

EDITED BY STEPHEN MOORE

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*NEW FIELDS
FOR THE WRITER*

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EDITED BY STEPHEN MOORE

TELEVISION

RADIO

FILM

DRAMA

NEW YORK

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PREFACE

"NEW Fields for the Writer" is no opportunistic phrase coined by an ambitious publisher and an alert editor. The phrase is indicative of new avenues of opportunity which are available to young assiduous writers. Those men and women who are vitally interested in making of writing their career must first be willing to learn the necessary technique of each medium: television, radio, film, drama. It is not until he or she has mastered the technical details of each craft that he can begin to reap whatever profits result from his ability or perseverance.

Each of these media has its own specialized problems. To approach these the writer cannot come with an arbitrary or "I'll-take-a-chance" attitude. He must, in order to attain success, be willing to learn all the rudiments—technical and theoretical; be willing and even anxious to study and expand his own knowledge. Then, after having learned the elementary details, he may try to infuse original ideas into his own work.

Let us take a theoretical example.

What may, for instance, be suitable to the needs of the theatre as a script may not be adaptable to the movies. Hence, it is imperative that the writer first learn what are the technical and mechanical demands that distinguish film-scenarios from drama-scripts.

An important rule to remember is: it is only when the writer is fully familiar with all the regulations that he can then afford to experiment.

Say a writer has a good idea for something, whether it be

a play for radio, television, film or drama. He does not yet know in what form this idea will take shape. He thinks or he has a hunch that his idea would make an exciting radio-script. He then proceeds to write the script, not knowing of course what to include or exclude. After some tedious weeks of work he finds, much to his consternation, that the collective result is a failure. That what he has written, say, to be broadcast, may have made a much more satisfactory film scenario. He discovers that neither the idea nor the form was suitable for this special medium. Perhaps he is unfamiliar with the technique of film-writing. But in spite of his apparent ignorance he decides to "take a chance," fails and, giving up in despair, permits what may have been a substantially profitable idea to be wasted.

It is obvious then that the first requirement of a writer, any writer, is to learn the special elements of his craft. It is too hazardous in these fields to rely upon hunches or assume that his fortuitous chance may turn out to be an actual profit.

If he wants to learn to write for the radio it is important that he learn all the angles of radio-writing. A writer, you must remember, is like an engineer. He must know what makes the machine work. In radio, he must be familiar with multitudinous details: timing, microphone, characterization, sound-effects, speech, suspense, etc. He must remember at all times that radio is an auditory medium and that he must suggest by sound what cannot be revealed by sight.

Conversely, film is now based both on sight and sound. But it is limited dimensionally. The camera can only probe flat surfaces. Television is also a limited medium. Its screen will be smaller than that of the film, with the result that its scope of action will also be restricted. You cannot cover distance or space on a stage as conveniently as the camera does in the movies.

Being prepared with all the limited facts of every me-

dium, the writer now sets to work planning every one of his ideas to fit into the requirements of either television, radio, movies or the theatre.

It is only when one knows what each craft requires that he can begin to experiment or to adapt. He can, for instance, transcribe a short story to radio. A radio script to the screen. A play to television. But no writer will hazard such transcription until after he has thoroughly mastered the technical demands of each medium.

It is with this objective in mind that the present book has been collated. Here are actual examples of technical construction as required in every medium. And if the writer will study the demands and terminology of each of these crafts, he will be better prepared to work out his own ideas in the form required.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE editor is immeasurably grateful to the following authorities for contributing illuminating forewords to the chapters of this book:

To Mr. Boris Todrin, eminent radio-writer and poet, for his introductory remarks to the chapter on Radio; to Mr. Sidney Kaufman, associated with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and lecturer on the cinema at the New School of Social Research, for his foreword on the Film; to Mr. William Kozlenko, editor of the *One Act Play Magazine*, for permitting us to use excerpts of the chapter on *Television and the One Act Play* by Gilbert Seldes of the Columbia Broadcasting System, of his invaluable book *The One Act Play Today*, published by Harcourt, Brace, New York. And, not least, to the authors who cooperated with us by permitting the use of examples of their work.

S. M.

New York, March, 1939.



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*NEW FIELDS
FOR THE WRITER*



TELEVISION*

FOREWORD

THE first impulse of anyone preparing to experiment in television programs is to fall down on his knees and thank heaven (and a few hundred dramatic writers) for the one-act play. Without being too sure of the ultimate nature of television programs, the experimenter assumes that the drama in one form or another will be an important element; and at once he shrinks back from the unpleasant necessity of compressing the contemporary full-length play to his requirements.

. . . So far as we can see now, a sight-and-sound program will have three major elements: direct transmission of events at the moment they occur (an inauguration, a tennis match, a riot); second, moving pictures—any movie can be placed before a film scanner and transmitted to the television receiver; and third, programs originating in the studio. This third section has to be subdivided because eventually it will include all of those programs now being broadcast which require or can easily use a visual counterpart, and in addition a certain number of programs which will be created because of available material. So that our studio work may include ballet dancing, lessons in cooking or higher mathematics (unlikely), symphony and jazz orchestras, demonstrations of gymnastics, musical comedy and the drama.

* *The One Act Play Day*, edited by William Kozlenko, published by Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York. Chapter on Television and the One Act Play by Gilbert Seldes, of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

To balance this warning, there is a promise that television, like radio, will probably use up its material very rapidly.

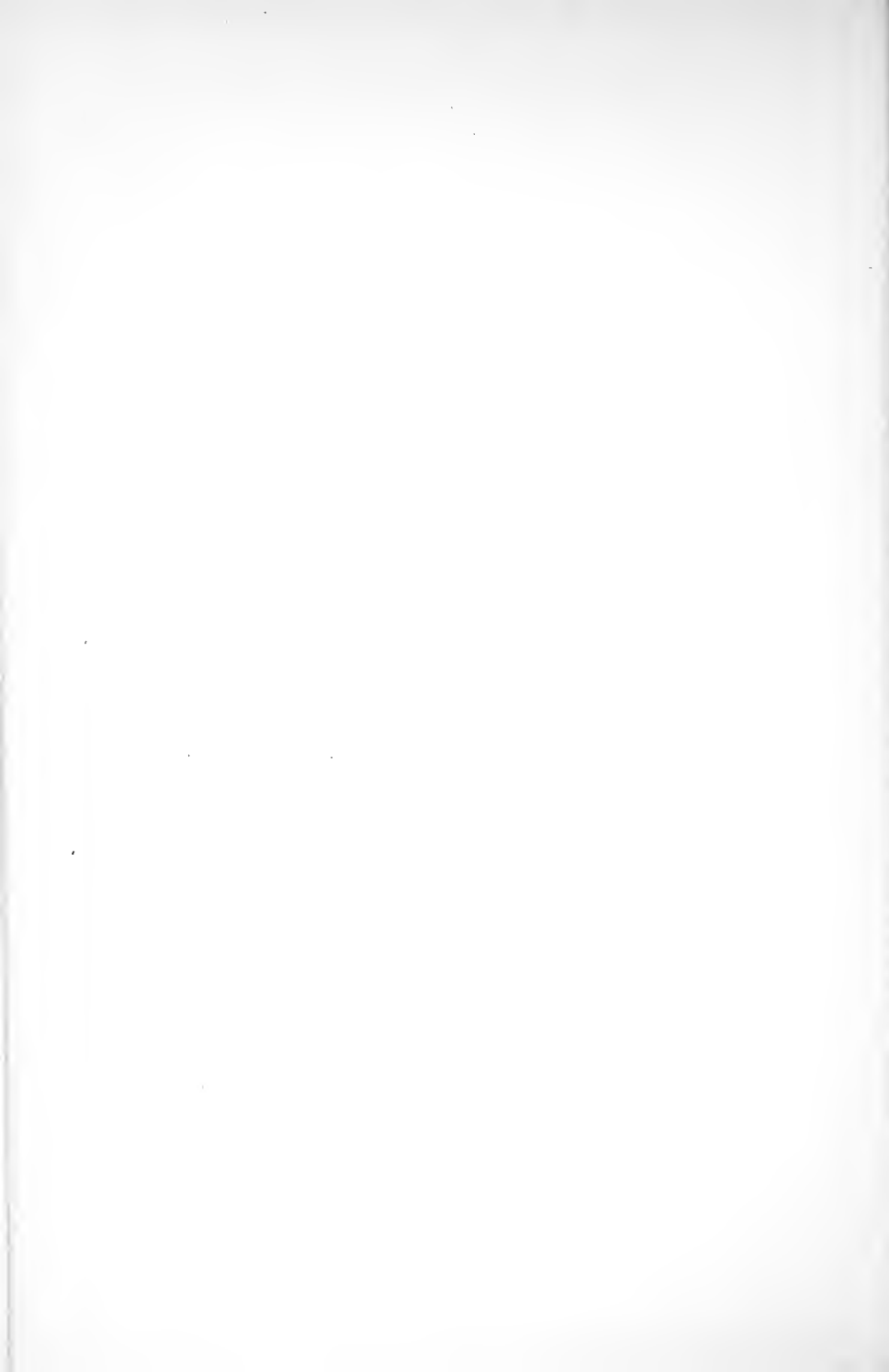
Tentatively and almost timidly, I suggest that the use of dramatic material in television will be governed by an unstable factor—the intensity of attention which the television screen will demand. A year ago I made a sort of rule-of-thumb guess, as an operating basis, that you would have to be five times as attentive to television as you are to current broadcasting. It is not merely sight, but motion which catches and holds the eye, that has been added to sound. This precisely reverses the experience of the moving pictures when sound was added; we know in effect that sound slowed up the movies because directors had not worked out the correct principles governing the relation of microphone and camera.

. . . That television can make its points more rapidly is obvious from the nature of the medium itself. There will be no waste of time in making the spectator aware of objects (doors or daggers) which are used in the dramatic action. Moreover, the action itself, being visible, will be self-explanatory; as things seen are more impressive than those heard, less emphasis will be required, and to avoid being repetitious and dull a dramatic program for television will have to proceed more rapidly than one adapted to sound broadcasting alone; television will possibly approximate the tempo of a stage presentation.

. . . At the beginning, the one-acter is peculiarly available for us. The dramatists who have learned to write in this form seem to have anticipated our requirements of compression and our capacities to present a sustained action in brief time. Particularly during the experimental stage the one-acter relieves us of the necessity of building many settings and it reduces the variety of costumes; moreover, our players will not require too long to memorize their parts and will therefore reduce the number of rehearsals. Fur-

ther, until the field over which the television camera can operate is extended, the comparatively small number of actors will be an advantage to us; we have worked out methods by which we can use larger numbers, but they are still expedients, and temporarily an action which is in the hands of only three or four people simultaneously in our visual field is ideal for us.

. . . Because a great many items in the ordinary television program will be short, I think that we will have to develop writers who understand the true relation between speech and action; those who invent a plausible but not too striking series of movements when words of great significance are being uttered and who can face the necessity of making the words themselves secondary at times to a sharply defined movement. The writer of one-act plays is in a good position because his experience has already been with a medium which offers him more difficulties than opportunities. It is a hard saying of Goethe's that the master can only prove himself when he works within limitations; it is hard, but it is also inspiring.



TELEVISION SCRIPT

*IT'S REALLY
QUITE SIMPLE*

BY HAROLD L. ANDERSON

CHARACTERS

JERRY TROOP

A WOMAN

A WAITER

A BUTLER

DOCTOR GAXTON

IRENE

DOCTOR RANDOLPH

IT'S REALLY QUITE SIMPLE

INTRODUCTION

THIS is an original playlet, designed for projection by Television. In preparing it, the author has possibly attributed to this new medium a flexibility and scope which, quite possibly, it does not as yet possess. There is, for instance, an emphasis on close-up, a device which, at the moment, may be technically unattainable.

Assuming, however, that the close-up may be effectively used, the only remaining difficulty which the author sees is the necessity for five separate units of setting.

It is the author's conjecture that Television favors the technique of projection of the living theatre and borrows only one important element from the motion picture—the *close-up*. In the use of this device, Television will reach an important peak and will develop it to a point far greater than is possible for the motion picture, which is necessarily limited to the mass psychology. The most obvious device for this exploration of character is the *close-up*, and since its requirements are so profound an entirely new technique of acting will probably be developed. Greater emphasis will be placed on the actor's facility of feature since the arching of an eyebrow or the movement of the underlip may carry a significant message to the individual in the audience. This is more true of Television than of the motion picture because of the more highly personalized relationship to the audience of the former.

Generally speaking, characterization must strike much

deeper and must expose more completely the fundamental *inner* personality of the character played. Thus, in this sketch, an attempt has been made to project the *inner* attitudes of Jerry, Gaxton and Irene in terms of their common problem rather than the superficial manifestations of those qualities. The eye has been described as the window to the soul. This may be literally true where Television is concerned.

It will be noticed that the author has used a technique similar to that of the motion picture shooting script. While these are listed and numbered as separate shots, actually, with the exception of five major breaks, the action is blended continuously from one shot to the next. This implies the use of a flexible recording medium, similar to the travelling camera. If this is possible to Television there should be no difficulty on that score. The author tried developing the sketch in standard playlet form, thus eliminating close-ups and travelling shots, but thought the result too static and lifeless for television projection.

Shots 1 to 5 cover the cigarette smoke, trace down the smoke to the cigarette in Jerry's nervous fingers, concentrate on the cigarette and fingers as the woman's voice and piano are brought in, swing upward to a study of Jerry's face, then downward to the letter which he has taken from his pocket, swing back to his face again to record his reaction to the letter, then swing across the room to shot 6, that of the woman leaning against the bar, then back to Jerry's face, and so on. Whether this is possible or not, it is certainly the more interesting treatment as compared to a broad shot of the saloon with all elements expressed in the very first picture.

Between shots 15 and 16 comes the first major break, the transfer of locale from inside to outside the saloon. It may be argued that Telecasting does not permit time for such a break in locale. Actually, if another camera can pick up the

action or the same camera slid down to cover set II, the time lapse should not be more than a few seconds, which time lapse can be covered for the audience by the strengthening of the musical theme which, it is assumed, would thread through the play itself.

The author is approaching this new and challenging projection problem with the attitude that a fairly standard Television technique has not as yet been established and is submitting this treatment as a sample of what he thinks the Television technique should be. If this ground has already been covered, no particular harm has been done and the author has benefited vastly from this first exploration into Television.



IT'S REALLY QUITE SIMPLE

1 *Distorted jangle of a piano. Hysterical laughter. Shot of grey-white smoke curling up against a dirty-grey wall background.*

2 *Follow down smoke to a cigarette clenched between JERRY TROOP'S index and middle fingers. Cigarette-ladden ash-tray in back of hand. A WOMAN laughs jerkily. The cigarette is twisted nervously between the thumb and two fingers.*

WOMAN'S VOICE (*drunkenly*): Play some more, Tony. Play a lot more. Play "Melancholy Baby." I wanna cry.

The fingers play nervously with the cigarette. A tinny blasphemy of "Melancholy Baby" is heard. The hand jabs the cigarette viciously into the ash-tray. Enlarge shot to include entire table and part of saloon background as . . .

WOMAN'S VOICE: Play it sweet, Tony. Play it sweet for Handsome over there.

The cigarette is smouldering in the ash-tray.

3 *Bring up to shot of JERRY TROOP'S face: young, strained, firm of jaw, dark, drink-sullen eyes, sensuous lips puffed and loose.*

WOMAN'S VOICE: Yuh wan' it sweet, Handsome?

JERRY'S eyes are on her, casual, uninterested. He feels in his coat pocket and pulls out a wrinkled letter. TONY hits an inspired high-spot.

4 *SHOT of letter, trembling slightly in JERRY'S hands. It reads: "Of course, I have been aware of what has*

been going on between you and Irene. I would consider it a privilege to see you and talk this over like two gentlemen." Signed D. L. Gaxton.

5 SHOT of JERRY's face. *Thoughtful frown, lips tightened. The side of his mouth twitches. A rush of air is expelled through his nostrils. He returns the letter to his pocket. His eyes roam about the room, stop as they fall upon the WOMAN.*

6 SHOT of WOMAN, *back against the bar. Sleazy, white satin evening gown, good figure, young hard face, blonde hair, alcoholic sparkle in eyes. She is holding a cocktail glass provocatively to her lips and gazing at JERRY over the rim. Her right eyelid lowers just a trifle.*

7 SHOT of JERRY, *full-face. He is looking at her in casual amusement, mild disgust. He beckons waiter, nods to glass as waiter appears. Waiter looks at JERRY as though he might refuse, then reluctantly picks up glass.*

8 SHOT of WOMAN *eyeing JERRY indignantly. But suddenly she smiles and starts toward his table. JERRY rises, more out of instinctive breeding than because of any interest in her.*

WOMAN: Lonesome?

JERRY: A little.

WOMAN: So'm I.

She pulls out a chair and is about to sit down. The waiter arrives with a drink, places it on the table.

JERRY picks it up as WOMAN gets set for a chummy evening.

9 SHOT of JERRY *downing the drink. He makes no move to sit down.*

10 SHOT of WOMAN *gazing at JERRY expectantly. Her face falls.*

11 SHOT of JERRY. *He nods to waiter, turns his back on the*

- WOMAN. *He looks at his wrist watch, then rubs his hand over his eyes.*
- 12 SHOT of WOMAN. *Haughty indignation. She rises abruptly and leaves table.*
- 13 SHOT of JERRY, *hand to eyes. The waiter arrives with his coat and hat. JERRY looks up, sways slightly. The waiter assists him into his coat, then lays bill on table. Waits expectantly, his eyes on JERRY. JERRY tosses coin on table, picks up bill and turns away. Waiter picks up coin and starts to clear table.*
- 14 SWING to JERRY *walking unsteadily toward cashier.*
- 15 SHOT of JERRY *paying bill. "Melancholy Baby" hits grand finale as he turns to the door and exists.*
- 16 SHOT of JERRY *outside door. Snow is falling. He turns his coat collar up. He looks again at his wrist watch.*
- 17 SHOT of *wrist watch—9:40.*
- 18 SHOT of JERRY *looking up and down street. He hitches his shoulders against the chill, then turns and trudges up the snow-covered street, his hands in his pockets. Fadeout.*
- 19 PROFILE shot of JERRY *trudging along. Small flakes of snow fall and melt on his face. He is staring straight ahead, his jaw hard, a creased frown line between his eyes. The occasional blare of an auto horn is heard together with other street sounds. His lips tremble and he swallows hard. The melted snow on his face might be beads of perspiration. The corner of his mouth twitches. He stops at a street crossing and waits for the traffic to pass. For a moment he is enveloped in a swirl of snow. The lights change and he starts to cross the street.*
- 20 Another shot of JERRY's face, *three-quarters. It is tense. He betrays trepidation, not quite fear. He stops, looks at his watch.*

- 21 SHOT of watch. It is 9:45.
- 22 SHOT of JERRY. He licks his lips.
- 23 SHOT of JERRY at base of steps leading up to fashionable brownstone house. He puts one foot on bottom step, then hesitates. Nervous, he looks down the street in indecision. He shrugs, his eyes glint. He starts to mount the steps. At the top, he presses the bell. As he waits, he looks again at his watch.
- 24 SHOT of watch. It is 9:48.
- 25 SHOT of door, JERRY's back to camera. The door opens. A benign, monkish looking butler appears, gazes at him for a moment.
- BUTLER: Oh . . . good evening, Mr. Troop.
He steps back, allowing JERRY to enter. JERRY nods and disappears into house. The door closes.
- 26 SHOT of BUTLER ushering JERRY into the library. JERRY comes forward into the room, turns to speak to BUTLER only to find he has disappeared noiselessly. JERRY shrugs; goes to table and takes a cigarette from box. He lights it and gazes about the room as he exhales. His eyes fall on crowded bookshelves. He starts toward them.
- 27 SHOT of section of bookshelf. Books by Thorndike, Ziegler, Hobhouse, Dumas—dealing with psychology, pathology, neurology.
- 28 SHOT of JERRY. He purses his lips in a smile and acknowledges his approval with a nod. He wheels suddenly.
- 29 SHOT of BUTLER standing in doorway.
- BUTLER: Doctor Gaxton will be down presently, sir.
If you will just make yourself comfortable.
- JERRY: Thanks.
The BUTLER bows and disappears.
- 30 SHOT of JERRY staring after him. He smiles sardonically. He puffs again at his cigarette, then turns and flings it

into the fireplace. He licks his lips and pulls his collar away from his neck. He looks about the room. His eyes light on a portrait of IRENE set on the library table. He goes to it, picks it up and studies it, his lips pursed judiciously.

31 SHOT of IRENE's photograph. *She is dark-haired, sensitive of feature, extremely beautiful. A dignified woman of refinement in her early thirties.*

32 SHOT OF JERRY's face as he looks at picture. *He smiles slightly and nods his head as though in encouragement. A discreet cough is heard. JERRY wheels sharply.*

33 SHOT of DOCTOR GAXTON entering. *He is in dinner coat, a distinguished, reserved, rather elderly man, splendidly set up, the firmness of his countenance qualified by a generous, slightly cynical but good-humored mouth. He extends his hand as he comes forward. JERRY starts to take it, has to shift IRENE's photograph from his right hand to his left, grasps GAXTON's hand awkwardly, then places the photograph on the table.*

34 SHOT of GAXTON's face. *The only betrayal of his amusement at JERRY's embarrassment is an amused glint in his penetrating eyes.*

GAXTON: It was good of you to come, Mr. Troop.

JERRY: Hey? Oh . . . Glad I was able to.

He straightens his shoulders. GAXTON is surveying him casually.

35 SHOT of GAXTON.

GAXTON: Won't you sit down?

JERRY: Thanks.

36 *Broaden shot to include fireplace and divan. In the background is the library table and IRENE's portrait. JERRY takes seat on divan. GAXTON goes upstage to liquor cabinet.*

37 SHOT of GAXTON at cabinet.

GAXTON: You'll want a drink, of course.

38 SHOT of JERRY *turning his head.*

JERRY: Hey? Yes . . . thanks . . .

39 SHOT of GAXTON *squirting soda into glasses. When they are filled, he picks them up and comes to the divan, offering one to JERRY. JERRY takes it and nods. GAXTON sits in easy chair opposite him. JERRY holds up glass in salute.*

JERRY: Well—

He raises the glass to his lips.

GAXTON (*calmly*): Your health, Mr. Troop.

JERRY's glass is arrested in mid-air. He nods to GAXTON, who smiles. They both drink.

GAXTON: I think you'll like this Scotch. A special blend I have imported.

JERRY (*awkwardly*): Yes . . . yes—it's very good. *There is an awkward silence. GAXTON studies JERRY who takes another sip of his drink.*

GAXTON: A good blended whiskey is like a well-conducted symphony. Which reminds me—what was your reaction to Torrenti's "Madame Butterfly"?

JERRY looks up quickly.

JERRY: Torrenti?

GAXTON: Yes . . . last week. You were there, weren't you?

JERRY: Why . . . why, yes . . .

He shifts uncomfortably.

GAXTON: Irene was quite thrilled.

JERRY licks his lips.

GAXTON: She's always had a passion for Puccini. But, of course, you'd know that. I find little time for such enjoyments—much to my sorrow—but I'm sincerely glad the pressure of my work hasn't compelled Irene to forego her own amusements.

JERRY tosses down his drink.

GAXTON (*rising*): Let me get you another, Mr. Troop.

He takes the glass from JERRY, who seems about to refuse, and goes to the liquor cabinet.

40 SHOT of JERRY's face. Beads of perspiration on his brow. *The squish of the soda siphon is heard.*

41 SHOT of GAXTON returning with drink. *He hands it to JERRY, then stands with his back to the fireplace.*

GAXTON: I used to feel that Irene rather over-did the gay life, but now I realize that my attitude at that time was primarily selfish. She has a need for those things . . . just as I have a need for these.

He gestures toward his books.

GAXTON: The more experience life grants me, the more I appreciate the need for each of us remaining and fulfilling ourselves within our own horizons. In my mind, I've sometimes criticized Irene for her apparent flightiness but, after all, she has so much time, so much money, and so little to do. She's a strange woman in many respects. She has a keen mind—very keen—but she persistently refuses to use it. An enormous vitality . . . completely misdirected. I've often pondered my absolute inability to apply to her the same psychiatric principles which govern my treatment of patients. I've directed many lives into their proper channels but somehow Irene has always eluded me. She's a challenge, Mr. Troop, a real challenge to any man. Haven't you found that so?

JERRY *starts*.

JERRY: Yes . . . yes, I think I do.

GAXTON: A certain professional pride has kept me from admitting the fact before, but I'm afraid I must confess a complete and rather unique failure.

Again there is a pause. JERRY casts about for something to say. Finally . . .

JERRY: You must find your work very interesting.

GAXTON *smiles*.

GAXTON: I do indeed. I've spent my life looking into people's minds . . . looking through them into their very hearts. Many of the things I've seen haven't pleased me.

He sips his drink.

GAXTON: No, they certainly haven't pleased me. Deceit, cruelty, greed . . . filth and ugliness. You'd be astounded, Mr. Troop, at the things of which the human mind is capable. Of course, there are splendid concepts, too, but from my experience I'm prepared to state that the mud far out-balances the marble. It's a pity. Man is the only one of God's creatures given the power to look on glory and yet he rests in the mud more swinishly than the lowest animal. No concept in life, no matter how sacred, seems to escape his vicious, stupid prostitution. I've had religious fanatics by the score come to me and demonstrate the cheapest sort of ego-centrism and self-exaltation while they piously mouthed a principle of selflessness and humble sacrifice. Others pervert the God-given instinct to love to the most degraded sensual ends. Of course, those I see are presumably not responsible, but one wonders. What is happening to the moral backbone of the human race? In moments of depression, the picture can look quite helpless.

He finishes his drink.

GAXTON: But you haven't finished your drink.

JERRY stares at the glass, licks his lips, then downs its contents. GAXTON is smiling down at him, his eyes steady, calculating.

GAXTON: But I'm not permitting you a word. Forgive me, Mr. Troop.

He gazes at JERRY solicitously, as though inviting him

to speak. JERRY, *befuddled by the liquor, casts about for something to say.*

JERRY (*suddenly*): No point to beating around the bush.

He stops and swallows, shaking his head to drive the mists from his brain.

JERRY: I love Irene. Possibly you do, too. But I think she loves me—know it, in fact.

GAXTON (*agreeably*): Yes?

JERRY: Decent thing . . . your consent to a divorce. *His hand rubs his eyes. With an effort, he straightens.*

GAXTON: Perhaps you're right. I've looked on divorce as a confession of weakness. Up to now, that is. I admit it seems to have its place.

JERRY *nods, a shade too vigorously.*

GAXTON: There are other ways of handling a situation of this sort, though.

JERRY *looks up, making a valiant effort to follow GAXTON's purring voice.*

GAXTON: In fact, in this instance I think divorce will be unnecessary.

He places his glass on the table and takes out a cigarette case, proffering it to JERRY.

GAXTON: Smoke?

JERRY *shakes his head. GAXTON selects one, lights it, and exhales the smoke appreciatively. It requires an effort on JERRY's part to keep his head from drooping.*

GAXTON: Where was I? Oh, yes . . . It seems to me, Mr. Troop, that when men of your caliber and mine, and a woman like Irene, become involved in something so unfortunate as this, we should cast about for a solution not quite so obvious as divorce. I have been searching my mind for that solution, Mr. Troop. Have you?

JERRY: I . . . I'm afraid I don't understand.

GAXTON: For one moment I thought I had found it. It's obvious that a mere legal separation, while mechanically logical, is far too inadequate for anything so emotionally splendid as love. Love is conceived in glory. It seemed to me it should die in glory. Do you follow me, Mr. Troop?

JERRY *is staring at him, blear-eyed.*

GAXTON: But there is an inevitable balance to life, Mr. Troop. Compensation, Emerson called it. Destiny holds the scales and as we pour the weight of our lives on the one pan, we receive our measure of reward and punishment on the other. Thus, Irene, who has given so little to life in terms of either good or evil, tosses the pitiful remnant of herself upon the scale. Destiny strikes the balance and—

He stops.

JERRY: And—?

GAXTON (*quietly*): Irene died this afternoon.

JERRY, *motionless, is staring at him.* GAXTON *draws deeply on his cigarette. Suddenly, JERRY's head sinks forward. GAXTON surveys him for some seconds.*

GAXTON (*as if to himself*): It was such a pitiful thing she had to offer.

JERRY *raises his head slowly. His eyes, heavy-lidded, are on GAXTON.*

JERRY (*dully*): Of what did she die?

GAXTON (*evenly*): Does it matter?

JERRY *is breathing heavily.*

JERRY: You . . . murdered her!

GAXTON: Murder? What is . . . *murder*, Mr. Troop? Irene died, that is all.

JERRY *springs to his feet.*

JERRY: You *murdered* her!

GAXTON: We are all instruments of Destiny. She was unfaithful to me—her husband. She would have been equally unfaithful to you. We are both better free of her, Mr. Troop.

He rises, picks up the glasses and goes to the liquor cabinet.

GAXTON: Let us drink to her death.

He is filling the glasses. He returns to JERRY and offers him a glass. JERRY taking it mechanically, his horror-stricken eyes on GAXTON.

GAXTON: Let us drink to all faithlessness.

He raises his glass.

GAXTON: To Irene. May she be less bored in Heaven than she was on earth.

JERRY is motionless.

GAXTON: You do not care to drink that toast? Then let us drink to another. To your death, Mr. Troop. *He drains his glass. JERRY swallows, his eyes still on GAXTON.*

JERRY (*with difficulty*): Where is she? Where's Irene?

GAXTON (*lightly*): You don't seem to understand, Mr. Troop. She is dead . . . and you are going to die. You're dying now.

The words fade into a dry laugh.

GAXTON: Yes . . . I killed Irene. She died painlessly . . . just as you will die. Up to the final moment she had no knowledge of what was happening to her. I couldn't bring myself to tell her. Death comes hard, even to the bored. I pitied her and didn't tell her that every sip she took brought her closer and closer to whatever happiness eternity might hold for her. I loved Irene, you see.

JERRY (*suddenly*): She *hated* you!

GAXTON: On the contrary . . . she loved me. And

had I let her go to you, she would soon have come back to me.

JERRY: Then why did you kill her, you crazy fool!

GAXTON: Who knows? Perhaps she angered me. She could, you know. She might only have laughed . . . or perhaps she turned away impatiently. It might have been one of a hundred things. The mind is treacherous. I only remember that I watched her as she drank . . . all unsuspecting. And then . . . a little later . . . she died.

JERRY is breathing heavily through parted lips. The full impact of GAXTON's words hits him. He sways slightly and brushes his hand across his eyes. He shakes his head again, the mists are closing in. Suddenly he becomes aware of the glass of liquor in his hand. He stares at it dumbly, then flings it from him. GAXTON smiles, his eyes surveying JERRY calmly. JERRY's hand clutches at his collar. He gasps for breath. Through the fog he sees GAXTON.

42 *SHOT of GAXTON's eyes, penetrating, mocking . . .*

43 *With a sharp cry, half scream, JERRY reels toward GAXTON. His hands are like claws, the fingers clenching and unclenching. GAXTON does not move. JERRY stops suddenly, his hand again brushes across his eyes, clutches at his collar . . . He spins and falls to the floor at GAXTON's feet . . .*

44 *The CORONER is bending over JERRY's body. GAXTON is standing by the fireplace, staring into the fire. The CORONER rises.*

CORONER: You say he started to speak and then tumbled over?

GAXTON: Yes, I saw that he was dead and, under the circumstances, I thought it best to call you.

GAXTON puffs on his cigarette. A figure appears in the doorway.

CORONER: I see. Who is this?

GAXTON: Oh . . . my wife. Irene, this is Doctor Randolph. A most unfortunate thing has happened. Jerry Troop is dead.

IRENE *comes forward, her eyes wide. She gasps at sight of JERRY, then turns her eyes on GAXTON. He is surveying her coldly, his jaw hard. Her hand goes to her throat.*

CORONER: Yes . . . Heart attack.

He turns and picks up his overcoat.

CORONER: I'll have the body removed immediately.

IRENE *is held by GAXTON's compelling eyes. She is gripped by a nameless terror. The CORONER is on his way to the door.*

GAXTON: Doctor Randolph . . .

The CORONER turns. GAXTON nods to JERRY.

GAXTON: You don't think he could have—

CORONER: Suicide?

He shakes his head.

GAXTON: I thought perhaps—poison, you know . . .

CORONER: Not a chance. I hate to say it but he's shot so full of alcohol, you couldn't kill him with formaldehyde.

He exits . . .

FADEOUT

RADIO

FOREWORD

IN DISCUSSING the field of radio writing one will invariably encounter essentially two methods of preparing material for production over the air. The first is writing conceived from the outset as a script; the second deals with the great source of most broadcasting—adaptation. We cannot deal here with the second branch for the simple reason that space does not permit; and a cursory examination is useless. For such problems as compression, deletion and the insertion of original effects require comparative demonstration: a line by line study in transition from story, news item or play to the finished radio script.

To begin with the writer will remember that it is the ear at which the voice or the musical note or the word are directed. What has been graphically visual must now be transmitted orally. When the writer has achieved familiarity with his new medium, the following formula might still be of use:

1. Write out a short paragraph summary of your play. Trace the line of your plot; list your characters; think of the sound effects necessary to convey the mood.
2. Name your characters, and on paper describe their characteristics.
3. Begin your play. Write the announcer's opening lines, if he is to *set* the play; write your beginning dialogue.

With these few precepts in mind it is well to pause at this moment to consider their development. Even when a strong, withal simple plot is available—and simplicity is important—the pacing of the action merits primary consideration. The dialogue must advance the line of action, create the atmosphere, and assert the characters of the people involved. At this point you may realize that the statements made above describe a good play, regardless of the form of its production. But what about radio? may be your logical rejoinder. Radio demands a combination of these things, for the attention of the listener must be held. He cannot recall the sound. He cannot peruse at his leisure, a reprint of the broadcast, except in cases so rare as to put them, for the present, beyond consideration. (Archibald MacLeish's *Air Raid* and *Fall of the City*; Alfred Kreymborg's *The Planets*; and Albert N. Williams' *Festival*, are the notable exceptions.)

When you have begun your dialogue, see to it, that:

4. Your first set of speeches outlines the problem.
5. The following dialogue carries the action, and acquaints you with the people in the play further.
6. Your climax is immediately recognizable.
7. Your play is read aloud and timed, and the sound effects are not overdone, but are timely interspersed.

And singularly, it is to a play not originally written for radio, to which I now turn: William Kozlenko's *Jacob Comes Home*. For in addition to being good theatre, this play is good radio. The scenic directions of this play as considered for radio, may be spoken by the announcer without any change whatsoever:

Time: *Present*

Place: *Berlin, Germany*

Scene: *It is evening, LIESE BRAUN, a girl in her early twenties, is standing by the window, peering out from be-*

hind the drawn portieres. The room is dimly lit, as if darkness were far more welcome than light. A candleabra with three flickering candles stands on the table. Her family sits around the table.

MAGDA: Any sign yet, Liese?

With the background immediately set by the announcer, the first voice, that of the mother, continues the mood, edging it with anxiety. Each continuing voice adds its burden of constraint and fear to the already tense situation. The play was written with care; and because of its lean quality is ready for the air just as soon as the technical directions for sound are inserted. But no change in dialogue is necessary for its broadcast.

Albert N. Williams' *Festival*, a play in free and stanzaic verse, concerns itself with the devastating effects of drouth in our own western states. Here, as in the *Planets*, by Alfred Kreymborg, rhythm forms the foundation. In addition to four characters (farmers), and the *Voice of the Land*, a combined chorus of six voices and *Echo* weave their cadences into the various harmonies built upon the theme.

The student should find this script rewarding from many angles, inasmuch as it appears here as an actual production piece. Repetition heightens the rhythmic pattern and emphasizes the allegorical quality:

VOICE OF THE LAND:

I am the dearly beloved of all things growing.

I am the soul and spirit of the yet unborn.

I am the long sought home of the ever dying.

I bore the waters and the wind.

I bore the mountains and the seas.

In *Festival*, the directions are not spoken; wherever indicated they serve as sign posts to the sound effects crew:

Music (accordion playing a dance).

Sound (crowd laughing).

Music (music stops).

Sound (applause—laughter).

The commentaries are not made by the chorus only; Peter, David, Henry and Aaron add their reflections to these of the chorus and *Echo*. You will notice that the chorus is not a fixed and static group. It is divided at times to produce a specific contrapuntal effect. The graphic representation of the dust storm closing the play is translated into sound. The wind, thunder, and the rain, unseen by the eye, are given to the air convincingly. The use of sound effects in this script is worthy of close attention. They are simple, real sounds, familiar and universal, and as such merit consideration. Before the student applies his 'prentice hand to bizarre or fantastic effects, his workshop efforts should concern themselves with the things he knows well and has taken from his daily living. For should he convey these effectively, he is reaching the area of immediate associations of the most representative cross-section of the population.

RADIO

FESTIVAL

BY ALBERT N. WILLIAMS

CHARACTERS

DAVID

PETER

AARON

HENRY

VOICE OF THE LAND

CHORUS (FOUR MEN AND TWO WOMEN)

NOTE: The chorus is a spoken chorus; not chanted. It is divided into two sections of three voices each, two men and one woman. When "all" is indicated, it is the combined chorus.

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FESTIVAL

CHORUS (ALL):

The land has voices.

The land has many voices,
varied as the many winds.

We . . . are the many voices of the living land.

SOLO: The stern voice . . .

CHORUS (ALL):

Of the land that shelters,
of the land that locks a nation in its heart.

SOLO: The soft voice . . .

CHORUS (ALL):

Of the gardens,
of the place where man is quiet.

SOLO: The voice of laughter . . .

CHORUS (ALL):

for the winds and waters,
hills and sun dipped valleys,
where man seeks rest.

SOLO: The tender voice . . .

CHORUS (ALL):

singing the terror of a heart alone,
and giving to each man
some share of ground
where he may build his home.

CHORUS (ALL):

We . . . are the voices of the living land,
created of such stuff as man himself.

We . . . are the many many voices of the living land.

(Board Fade)

CHORUS (THREE):

After all man's length of days,
The path of life turns but to seed,
And man's last ritual displays
The first fulfillment of his need.

There is a time for earth to rest,
Secure beneath its cape of snow,
The water sleeping in its breast.
The fire sheltered there below.

CHORUS (ALL):

And when the earth turns from the sun,
And the land lies cold and still,
In man's heart are hopes begun,
The Earth will waken to fulfill.

CHORUS (ALL):

Yes, Earth will waken to fulfill,
But now the land lies cold and still.
But now the land lies cold and still. . . .
(*Board Fade*)

SOUND (*Murmur of voices—Laughter.*)

HENRY: And I'll raise corn,
for my land is low, and in a sheltered place.

DAVID: My land is high,
and on a level plain,
so I'll raise wheat.

AARON: My fields are shallow,
and the rich damp earth is precious.
Sugar beets are all that I can grow,
and make a profit.

HENRY: Look!
Here comes Peter,
walking down the road.
Now,
he has fields like ours:

flat lands,
as well as quarters pocked with hummocks,
shallow lands,
and swamp acres hidden from the sun,
all these kinds of soil
on his great farm,
and yet the passing years
have found him richer with each reaping,
while we,
and other farmers in this state,
have barely saved a bushel
from our needs for living.

AARON: I'd like to know his secret.

For years, he and his brothers,
on their great farm
with their wide acres,
have made their crops so rich
and so abundant
that every second vine became a gift
and an inheritance.

DAVID: His trick?

His way of growing rich?

I know it.

Peter is a good farmer,
and his brothers,
and all others that have grown wealthy on the soil.

Good they were
in the fact that they can raise such steady crops
from year to year.

Good farmers by the token
that their sown seeds bloom forth
in such profusion.

They till the soil,
and till it well.

Their trick is simply this!

They do not give the land a rest.

AARON: How's that?

DAVID: You are better farmers
who leave a field lie fallow
every second year.

Peter doesn't,
and the land *is* quicker in his acres,
and *has* a plumper find of food
in its rich groin,
all because he never lays it barren.
But the land is like a man:
It must sleep
and between its time of heavy work lie idle,
or, like a man fatigued
beyond the reach of stimulation,
fall useless in its prime.

SOUND (*Door opens and shuts.*)

PETER: Good morning, neighbors!

ALL: Hello, Peter!

HENRY: Come . . .

bring an empty box,
and find a place beside the stove.

PETER: No chair for me, Henry.

I didn't come to the store for talk.

HENRY: What else have you to do?

The snow has not yet melted in the gulleys,
and, on the flat places,
the ground is frozen underfoot.
There is nothing you can do
towards farming in this weather.

PETER: I can be sharpening my plows,
oiling up my harrows,
setting edges on my mattocks,
weighing down my drag,
loosening my spreader,

so that I can seed and plant
on the very first day of growing time.

AARON: David here was telling us . . .

PETER: Yes, David was saying, I suppose,
that I am ruining my land.

Ha ha . . . is that right, David?

DAVID: You know what I have said.

I have told them nothing
except what I've told you in warning.

PETER: Yes, I know.

That I should treat my land as if it were an old man,
water it and feed it,
as it were toothless,
and rest it every other year,
as it were broken of ambition,
blanket it when it lies fallow
with deep-rooted grass
that must be taken up and weeded out
when the land is rested.

Oh, I know what David says,
but judge, friends,
who is the better farmer?

AARON: That's an easy question!

HENRY: We know, Peter,
who is the better farmer,
and envy you your skill.

PETER: Yes, for all David's lessons
in cultivation,
I'm the better farmer.

He rests his land,
and cares for it like a child.
I force my land, and it gives fruit
far beyond his frail hopes for bumper crops.

DAVID: But what I say

I know is true.

Why there is scripture says it.

PETER: So? Bringing in scripture
to bolster up your wasted efforts
at good farming.
Well, what is it?

DAVID: You know it:
The Lord saith,
I brought you into a plentiful country
to eat the fruit thereof,
but when ye entered,
ye defiled My land,
and made My heritage an abomination.

PETER: Ha ha . . . a farmer is judged by what produce he
can show.

And at the festival,
I'll show what I have done,
and grown on the land you say I've ruined,
and, more than that,
because this county in the state, can be the richest,
fattest land,
Aaron here, and Henry,
and all others I can find,
will work with me this season,
plowing up their fallowed fields,
physicking their land
with chemicals and drugs,
and forcing it by every means that we can find.

AARON: Yes!

HENRY: If that's the secret of your great success,
then we will follow.

PETER: Fine!

And then we'll see what land can do when forced,
what crops can grow when the soil is truly tried,
and you can rest your little acres,
fever them with grasses,
and coax them like truant children

with rests and periods of vacation.
O Lord! Such talk from you,
who never grew a prize crop in all your life!
Enough of it!

HENRY: Good!

AARON: Fine! We're with you there!

(Board fade)

CHORUS (THREE):

Deep within the heart of earth,
the fires break their granite ties,
The waters struggle for re-birth,
and Spring is blazoned in the skies.

CHORUS (THREE):

And when Earth quickens underfoot,
and strengthens at the touch of Spring,
The hopes of men take deeper root,
and blend into each growing thing.

CHORUS (ALL):

And thus the Earth is loved by men,
the hands of hunger reaching deep,
Impatient for the moment *when*
the Earth is wakened from her sleep.

CHORUS (ALL):

The hands of hunger digging deep
When Earth awakens from her sleep,
When Earth awakens from her sleep.
(Board fade)

SOUND (*Horses stamping and neighing.*)

PETER: Ho there! Haw!

Pull, ye creatures!

I know the ground's still frozen,
but it must come up.

Pull, ye creatures!

SOUND (*Horses stop.*)

PETER: Hi! Aaron!

AARON (*very distant*): Ho Peter!

PETER (*shouts*): Hurry up, and we'll be finished,
and plow up Henry's fields next,
and then tomorrow,

lay your acres open to the warming sun!

HENRY (*distant*): I'm very nearly finished over here!

PETER: Well and good,
and let's be at our business.

Giddap ye pair of lazy mares!

SOUND (*Horses whinny and stamp.*)

PETER: Hi David!

SOUND (*Horses stop.*)

DAVID (*off*): Hello friends.

AARON: David, bring out your team,
help us plow your lands,
and we'll come over to yours
with all our strength combined!

DAVID (*fades on*): I see all men are plowing, Peter,
in groups of three,
working on each other's land,
with resources intertwined.

PETER: Yes. I organized the farmers in this county
to help each other with the plowing.
On this day, all men are joined
into a great army, plowing on each other's lands.
The westing sun will find the ground
laid open for the seed,
so fast and skillful is our welded strength.

DAVID: Didn't the fact enter your mind, Peter,
that the Spring is only come today;
that it is too early April
for the land to take the plow?

PETER: Not for me, David, nor for them,
Henry and your good friend Aaron,
nor all the farmers in this county,
and in this state, who wish to make some showing

in the harvest time
with prize crops,
giant plantings, and rich reapings.

AARON (*fades on*): Get out your team, David,
and help us plow,
and we'll help you.

HENRY (*fades on*): Yes . . . we all have set aside this day
to help each other break the ground
for planting.

DAVID: But the season is not old enough
for planting.

PETER: For us it is,
For us, who want a prize harvest!
The frost is out of ground,
and the dark, rotted weeds have found new life
and gone green again.
This very day the year rolled into seeding time.

DAVID: But last night the ground was frozen.
It's only now awakened.

PETER: Then that's the time to set your plow,
though David disagrees with what I say.
Cut deep and early
before the land finds hardness.
That's half the fight
in raising bumper crops.
Get your seed into its nest
before the earth gets solid underneath
with the growing things,
the brown roots, the green grasses . . .

DAVID: The strength-giving food
which the soil needs!

PETER: Food be plagued, for it slows a crop,
stunts a giant reaping,
and makes harder every task in tending fields.

DAVID: But these deep cuts, before the earth has wakened!
Peter, it will keep it . . .

PETER: I know . . . it will keep the land from struggling.

Man and Nature keep a constant fight,
but the first one gets a hold upon the other,
wins the battle.

Set in your plow before the land has stirred,
then the soil's beaten,
and that's what we want,
who have long fought hard
for every bit of food
the Earth allows us.

HENRY: With our new way,
we do not beg our bounty from the land:
we take it!

DAVID: And kill the land in taking.

You fool, it cannot last forever,
this always taking from the land,
and never putting back,
leaving no natural grasses
for the earth to eat,
never giving rest;
always forcing crops
beyond the limit of the land.

You twice fool!

You've filled Henry, Aaron here,
and all these good old men
who knew and loved the land,
filled them with desire
to do as you,
sent them to the fields
blood thirsty for these huge
unbalanced crops you grow,
angry at themselves for never having forced the land
before
to grow rich on its bounty.
They're plowing up their fallow fields,

weeding out the natural grasses in the gullies,
laying open in frantic carnage
the new awakened plains
which were preparing for the seed,
Aye, they'll dig,
as you have taught them,
deep and early,
in the very fields that fed them.
They'll persuade the land
with chemicals and rough purgings
to grow these bumper crops,
and richen on the fruit
they do not need for living.
But the land will die
in labor at mothering these monster crops
when you have sought out its rich grasses,
plowed them up for planting space,
wakened it from fallow, strengthening rest!
The land will die beneath your plow.

PETER (*laughs*): Be gone with your terrors
and mad warnings!

AARON: Yes . . .

HENRY: Find your plow
and join us.

AARON: Or else leave us to our work!

DAVID: What could I do to stop your mad course?

AARON: Nothing!

HENRY: Go, old fool,
go to your ancient methods
and weak, ravaged crops.

PETER: Aye,
Earth is man's province,
there must he feed.
Earth bore him and must be his grave.
To have is man's privilege,

and to take is *man's*.

Ha ha . . .

HENRY: Get up, you horses!

AARON: Pull, you beasts!

PETER (*fades off*): You strong horses,
pull . . . the plow beneath your weight
will turn to the warming sun
the hidden seeding places!

DAVID: O Earth,
what fools are men,
how patient the wide acres that allow them.

SOUND (*Horses neighing and stamping.*)
(*Board fade*)

CHORUS (THREE):

Thus do men their love declare,
and, etched upon the tender land,
where men have been, the scars appear,
first symbols of their fierce demand.

CHORUS (THREE):

And Earth, in simple shrift is wed,
bride undecked and unadorned,
no broidery, for the living dead
are neither entertained nor mourned.

CHORUS (ALL):

So Earth, with all her ravaged fields
is gravid on the marriage day,
and Spring's quick hungering reveals
sharp prophecy of what's to pay.

CHORUS (ALL):

Yes, on the noon of wedding day
there is a shadow to repay.
There is a shadow to repay.
(*Board fade*)

SOUND (*Crickets chirping—frogs croaking.*)

SOUND (*Horse and buggy fade in.*)

PETER (*distant*): Whoa! David?

DAVID: Hello, Peter.

SOUND (*Horse and buggy nearer, then stop.*)

PETER (*fades in*): Walkin' home?

Get in the buggy,

And I'll drive you.

DAVID: Thanks. I like the walk.

It's pleasant out tonight.

PETER: Been to town?

Tomorrow is the day of harvest:

Reaping, mowing, gathering,

the crops we've laid,

then festival.

My crop will be a winner,

and I'll celebrate by dancing,

drinking, singing at the Grange.

I'll wear new clothes.

There'll be prizes for the finest crop,

and they'll go to those

who prove they love the land most deeply.

The goodness and fullness of my crops

will bear me out in that.

Eh, David?

DAVID (*disgusted*): You! You love the land!

PETER (*laughs*): You're jealous.

DAVID: You love the land

who never knew the earth

except as crude machinery

for your greater wealth.

PETER: You're being bitter

for your harvest will be thin.

DAVID: You never felt the soil

surge beneath your feet,

the loose and living earth around your ankles

like a loving thing.

Not you!

For you, only prizes!

The earth, if stripped and forced,
will give you more than only bread;
will give you riches past your due;
will give you fame, and glory.

PETER: I bought my land for use,
David—to serve me,
as a tree might shade,
or a stone support.

DAVID: This earth, Peter, is a living thing,
of far greather stature
than any fast dying mortal.
It was here, pregnant with food
before any man,
and will still be bearing fruit
when the race of men
is only rock beneath its soft hills.

PETER: There's more than one
way of loving
something—that's
to use it.

DAVID: You love it!
Stifling it, and scarring it to death
in your modern way of farming.
This land is living, Peter,
and needs attention much as we!
I know!

I love the land and know it!

SOUND (*Suggestion of thunderhead once.*)

DAVID: Listen, Peter!

PETER: Yes?

SOUND (*Once again a single tap on the thunderhead.*)

DAVID: Do you hear it?

SOUND (*Horses whinny and stamp.*)

PETER: Whoa there, you mares.

I hear nothing.

VOICE OF THE LAND (*echo*): Ahhhhhh . . .

DAVID: There!

Hear that, you who say the land is only dead soil
for your use!

SOUND (*Horses whinny with fear.*)

VOICE OF THE LAND (*echo*): Ahhhh . . .

PETER: You're crazy!

You fool horses,
stand still!

VOICE OF THE LAND (*echo*):

I am the land.

I am the living Earth.

SOUND (*Horses whinny.*)

PETER: You crazy beasts!

DAVID: They feel it too.

Did you hear it?

PETER: David, you're an idiot.

I can hear nothing.

DAVID: Then feel,

feel the force stirring in the land,

feel it stirring in your blood!

Listen, if you know the land!

VOICE OF THE LAND (*echo*):

I am the hope in the center of man's heart.

I am the feast upon which all men wait.

I am the mother of all mankind.

I bore the rivers and the fruit.

I bore the forests and the hills.

DAVID (*more distant*): There . . . now you can hear!

PETER (*distant*): Fool . . . I heard nothing.

Only the wind in the meadows.

I say you're crazed!

VOICE OF THE LAND (*closer, echo*):

I am the dearly beloved of all things growing.
I am the soul and spirit of the yet unborn.
I am the long sought home of the ever dying.
I bore the waters and the wind.
I bore the mountains and the seas.

DAVID (*as the LAND fades out*):

You have heard the crying of the land beneath you,
the proud announcement of her crops.
Aye, Peter, surely you shall see the day arrive
when the Earth will wander
desolate and barren,
ugly, scarred,
her fruitful body burned
beyond all hope of bearing,
her flower gone,
hated, scorned, and feared,
wasted, a desert, blind and dry.

VOICE OF THE LAND (*distant, echo*):

I am the land . . .
I am the living Earth . . .

SOUND (*Single tone on the thunderhead.*)
(*Board fade*)

CHORUS (THREE):

Man, who hungered in his quest
is now serene, the wasting Earth
holds consummate within her breast
all life itself, arrayed for birth.

CHORUS (THREE):

The land, in final shroud adorned,
the grains and grasses on her brow,
awaits her death alone, unmourned,
Death which harvest will endow.

CHORUS (ALL):

And thus the course of life is spent,

from planting time to harvest hour.
The Earth lies emptied, innocent
of growth, herself divest of flower.
(*Board fade*)

MUSIC (*Accordion playing a dance.*)

SOUND (*Crowd laughing.*)

MUSIC (*Music stops.*)

SOUND (*Applause—laughter.*)

HENRY: And now, folks,
the giving of the final prize!
The grand prize
for the finest all 'round farmer of us all;
the man who grew the most,
raised the most, sent to market most;
made his land produce more crops
than any other farmer in these parts!
Our old, and most beloved friend!
Peter!

SOUND (*Crowd cheers and applauds.*)

PETER: Thank you, friends.

SOUND (*Crowd cheers and applauds.*)

PETER: This year has been a good one.

We've all had crops to make us rich.

I say, a cheer to next year's harvest!

And finer crops than ever!

We'll all plant earlier,

reap more, and get a richer bounty from the land.

SOUND (*Crowd cheers.*)

PETER: No more old fashioned farming,

but chemicals that sweeten in the soil

and cut in half the gestatory days

of this slow growing land!

No longer will we scratch the earth like beggars,

finding, here a crust, and there a crumb.

Now we hold the earth in harness,
guide it where we wish,
and use it as we want!

SOUND (*Crowd cheers.*)

SOUND (*Thunder.*)

PETER: Listen! Thunder!

SOUND (*The cheers die out.*)

SOUND (*Thunder.*)

PETER: No sooner have we harvested one crop
than the rains have come
to moisten up the clay,
loosen it, enrichen it
for next year's seed.

SOUND (*Cheers.*)

SOUND (*Thunder—heavy rain starts.*)

PETER: A rich strong rain like this
will guarantee a fuller harvest in the Spring.
So dance a festival to this good, green earth,
her goodness, and her bounty!

SOUND (*Cheers.*)

SOUND (*Thunder and rain up.*)

MUSIC (*Accordion commences in the dance . . .*)

SOUND (*Thunder and rain.*)

(*Board fade*)

SOUND (*Steady rain.*)

SOUND (*Heavy knocking at the door.*)

PETER (*distant*): Yes? What is it?

SOUND (*Knock on the door.*)

PETER (*closer*): I'm coming.

SOUND (*Door open.*)

PETER: What is it? You? David?

What is it that you want
so late at night
in this rain?

DAVID (*slowly and certainly*): Peter . . . I have come to
show you something.

PETER: Why man . . . you're daft!

Go home, and sleep.

It's too early yet for business.

The night is not yet spent,
and it's raining hard.

Go home, I say!

DAVID: There will be time for going home.

For sleeping and arising.

Much time, after this day is past.

We farmers will have little else to do,
but now, come with me.

PETER: I'll do nothing of the kind.

Step back, or I'll slam this door upon your hand.

Go on . . . get out!

DAVID: Peter.

PETER: What's this? Put down that gun.

Why, you're mad enough to shoot me.

DAVID: Yes . . . but I shall not.

'T were better you should die so quick
like a broken lantern in a harsh wind
than slowly kill yourself in feeble seeking
for new lands.

I won't hurt you, Peter.

This gun will only make you come with me.

PETER: Very well. Where is it you want me to go?

And mind you, David,

Tomorrow morning

I'll have the law upon you
for this business with a gun.

DAVID: Never mind tomorrow morning.

Tonight I want you here to watch
a queer occurrence in your fields.

PETER: What's wrong with my fields?

DAVID: Just come along. We'll see.

PETER: If you've been up to any jealous deviltry—

DAVID: I've done nothing.

You yourself have been the doer.

Over here . . . I want to make you watch
your finest field . . . this near one to the house.

PETER: You must be mad! What's there to watch?

DAVID: The rain.

The soft and slaking rain.

PETER: It's a Godsend to us.

Our lands are reaped,
and now will be refreshed.

New life will spring within it from the seed
we plant next year.

DAVID: So?

Then look . . . over here, where I am standing.

The soft, refreshing rain
can bring no life to this field.

PETER: Why . . . why . . . hold that lantern higher.

The grey light cannot be trusted.

DAVID: No . . . it is not false.

It shows the truth.

PETER: It's washing out the top-soil!

DAVID: Yes . . . the life-bearing rain
is riddling your field with little gulleys.

PETER: Look there . . .

That terrace is washed out.

DAVID: And over here the hard-packed ridges crumble.

PETER: Why . . . I don't know what's happening.

I never saw a rain before
cut up a field
into a slate of muddy streams.

DAVID: No . . . you never did,
but here it is.

PETER: But the rain is killing these fields
for next year's planting!

DAVID: The rain is killing nothing, Peter.
It merely falls, as it has fallen

many times before.

The only thing:
there are no roots beneath the soil,
no hands, deep reaching,
no binding sod to keep the land in place.

PETER: But what . . . ?

DAVID: You . . . your farming methods.
For years you have abused the fields,
weakened them,
and now the reapers have gone on and the land is empty.
All these lands are empty.
Likewise shorn of their protection
are Henry's fields and Aaron's,
all the acres in this part,
torn to death by heartless crops.

PETER: But we had to raise a harvest.

DAVID: Aye, that is true.

The land begrudges nothing.
Listen, Peter—I'll explain.
A fallow field, you said,
was wasted,
full of weeds and grasses.
Those grasses made the soil strong,
held the seed from year to year,
insured a fertile field.
But you would not allow them.
They wasted lands which might have borne a crop,
and so, these last few years,
your fields lost their strength reserved,
and now have broken,
yes, broken, as the sinews in a mighty man
might break when he is taxed
beyond endurance in his work.
Also, your chemicals and drugs
were cruel things.

They forced the soil to vomit up its salts
and acids.

Each plant a portion has of food.

You made the Earth increase that share.

Well, the crops were bloated
rich beyond the normal measure,
but the land is like an old man,
emptied of his spices and his juice,
desolate and dry.

Now look!

after all these years

the end is come.

In all this land the rain tonight
is cutting through the weakened soil,
drowning, washing out
the one-time luscious Earth.

Look about you.

On every hand the fields that were so fruitful
are now become a mire.

Tomorrow, when the sun is risen,
this mud will dry—caked and solid,
like the scale of some disease.

Peter . . . this was your creation.

PETER: David . . . I cannot understand it.

I've been a good farmer and an honest man.

SOUND (*One tap on thunderhead.*)

PETER: David! Listen!

DAVID: Yes, Peter . . . you can hear it now.

VOICE OF THE LAND (*echo*): I . . . am the land . . .

DAVID: Yes . . . we hear it, Peter,
the land I loved,
and the land you loved.

VOICE OF THE LAND (*echo*): I am the land.

I am the living Earth.

PETER: God be praised, David,
I can hear it!

VOICE OF THE LAND (*echo*):

I have been the refuge and the strength of man.

I have borne him and will be his grave.

I am his first beginning and his final self.

I bore the flower and the fruit.

I bore the seed within the seed.

PETER: O Lord, have mercy on me!

This thing that I have done is a sin
against Thy land.

VOICE OF THE LAND (*fades off, echo*):

My greatness is the strength of birth.

My beauty is eternal seed.

My tenderness is death.

PETER: May God forgive my sin!

VOICE OF THE LAND (*distant, echo*):

I am the land.

I am the living Earth.

PETER: O Lord,

have pity on me.

May I have strength to make undone
my sins against Thy bounty!

SOUND (*Tap on the thunderhead.*)

(*Board fade*)

CHORUS (ALL, *softly*):

Oh grief that man cannot repay
the anguish in his heart
when his spirit in dismay
sees his body torn apart.

(*Board fade*)

SOUND (*Murmur of voices—echo, as if in a hall.*)

PETER: Friends!

SOUND (*The murmur stops.*)

PETER: All gathered in this room today,
and come together with the single hope
of finding out if men, in banded groups,

can have a welded strength beyond their scattered powers:
Listen!

Our land is cruelly cut and deeply scarred
because we farmers with the one desire
to force great riches from the weakened soil
have starved the Earth, and suffered it to yield
beyond its strength.

And now, since harvest time
a great rain has hurt the dying Earth
and shapened it into a thing deformed.
These past five weeks the burning sun
has seared this land into a scorched waste.
But now the soil, what had once been flooded
is dry and desiccate within its veins.

Our lesson has been learned, and we have suffered;
now let us pray together for deliverance,
that rains may come and give our lands new birth,
and let us vow that we shall treat our lands
with tender care, and find within each clod of Earth
ourselves.

SOUND (*Murmur.*)

PETER: O Lord, who gave this land for living . . .

ALL: O Lord . . .

PETER: Deliver us from Thy wrath.

ALL: Thy wrath is great!

PETER: Our hearts are humble and our spirits meek.

ALL: Our hearts are humble in Thy sight.

PETER: Send us some breath of wind,
for wind brings rain.

ALL: Send us some breath of wind.

AARON: Peter . . . listen!

PETER: What's that?

AARON: Look! Against the sky!

HENRY: A cloud!

VOICE: A great, dark cloud!

SOUND (*Crowd cheers!*)

PETER: Our prayer is answered.

AARON: Wind!

I feel it on my face!

A breath of wind!

VOICE: God be praised!

VOICE: Glory!

HENRY: We shall dance!

AARON: And make festival for salvation!

PETER: The Lord has taken mercy on us.

AARON: Look . . . the cloud is closer.

HENRY: It is moving on us!

SOUND (*Crowd cheers.*)

SOUND (*Crowd laughs and cheers.*)

SOUND (*Heavy shot on thunderhead.*)

VOICE OF THE LAND (*terrified, echo*):

I am the land

I am the land

I am wasted and torn

I am dying

I am dying

My green hills have gone to dust

and my rain-laden winds to harsh fire

myself must I myself replenish

and the years of the locust are upon all living things!

SOUND (*Wind.*)

AARON (*horrified*): The cloud!

PETER: Is dust!

ALL: Dust . . . dust . . . dust.

SOUND (*Wind to a scream.*)

VOICE OF THE LAND (*echo*):

I am dying, I am dying

I am only dust.

SOUND (*Screaming of wind.*)

BOARD FADE

FILM

FOREWORD

A MOTION picture scenario consists of camera instructions and sound notations, built upon the skeleton of a story line. The camera instructions, no matter how complete, only suggest the images which will be recorded in photography and given form through composition and editing to yield an end-product of true montage. The sound notations include dialogue and special effects but usually omit music.

The scenario is generally a collective effort. Stratified in it are the theme and dramatic intention of the author of the original story source; the technical skills of the scenarist and the director. Since the arrival of sound the written scenario has grown in importance. The magnificent rambunctiousness of many silents, especially farces, resulted from "shooting on the cuff," capitalizing the spontaneous imagination of work in process. Until the arrival of sound, the scenario was a rough blue-print of suggested characters, scenes, and situations. This blue-print was sketched so that its written form was far from anything that might be mistaken as literature; and the writer who did the actual "paper work" was hardly a creative force at all, rather a reporter of the ideas of the gag man and director. Sound transformed the scenario into the screenplay and placed emphatic value on dialogue; moreover, the technical skill of the scenarist had to cope with an auditory as well as a visual element, complicating the craft of rendering a story line into a scenario.

The world of the scenario is an intensified segment of the world of the movie, a meticulous description of sensory experiences.

The ideal scenario is a disciplined stream of consciousness

progressing by logical associations of the eye and ear along the dramatic continuity of the story thread. Where the associations have been imaginatively realized the scenario approaches in effect that automatic scenario of the soul, thought.

While the novel is usually reported from a single continuous point of view and the play eliminates the author altogether except as he identifies himself with some protagonist in it, the camera is an ever-variable presence. The camera may merely record all the action passing before it; or it may narrate by selecting only those phases of the action necessary to tell the story. But the camera may also be critical and editorial as in juxtaposing shots to establish new and revealing relationships between images. The camera can be poetic, romantic or symphonic. The camera can even become a character in the action, or may substitute itself for any other character in registering sensations.

Because the screen is intense and hypnotic, the scenarist must always "keep the ball in the air." Instead of exits and entrances with appropriate speeches justifying arrival of the character or confessing his motive in going, the motion picture is liberated to deal only with moments of pure dramatic grace. The theatre compresses reality but the motion picture condenses the theatre. The purity and intensity of moments of movie demand talented transitional devices. Psychologically correct transitions are the fiber and suppleness of a scenario.

The essence of movie is action and the scenario is only a second hand description of that action. It barely suggests tempo. It omits altogether the impacts of photography and music; panorama, pageantry, spectacle; and the magnetism of good acting. These are "production values"; the producer and director will exploit them to reinforce the fundamental values of the scenario. Substitution of production values for scenario is probably the worst fault of the commercial screen.

FILM SEQUENCE

BACK DOOR TO HEAVEN

SCREENPLAY BY
JOHN BRIGHT AND ROBERT TASKER

FROM AN ORIGINAL STORY BY
WILLIAM K. HOWARD

DIRECTED BY
WILLIAM K. HOWARD

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C H A R A C T E R S

HALE

KISHLER

CAROL

JOHN SHELLEY

CHARLEY SMITH

POLICEMAN

MRS. CHARLES SMITH

MISS WILLIAMS

FRANKIE ROGERS

FILM SEQUENCE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE following is the complete final scene of William K. Howard's picture, "Back Door to Heaven." The script was written by John Bright and Robert Tasker from an original by Howard. The story is based on an event of Howard's boyhood in the small midwestern town of St. Mary's, Ohio. Howard graduated from school together with Jim Tully and Charles Makley. The three friends parted and went their separate ways in life. Howard became a prominent motion picture director, Tully an author, while Makley fell in with the Dillinger gang. He was condemned to death for killing a sheriff and was killed by guards while trying to escape from the death house one night.

Around this incident, Howard wrote the story of a likable and even admirable boy, Frankie, who was born on the wrong side of the railroad tracks and drifted into a life of crime through circumstances beyond his control. The moral of the story is that "There, but for the grace of God, go I," and that we all do the best we can. The picture traces the lives of a number of school children of St. Mary's, beginning with their graduation from school and ending with a class reunion fifteen years later. Numerous characters and widespread backgrounds have been given unity by a tightly-knit script. The chief characters are Frankie, played by Wallace Ford, who drifts into a life of crime and escapes from the death house to return to his class reunion; Carol (Patricia Ellis), Frankie's sweetheart, who wanted to be an

actress and became a burlesque dancer; Miss Williams (Aline MacMahon), the local school-teacher, who understands and sympathizes with Frankie; John Shelley (Van Heflin), who became an impoverished lawyer; Charley Smith (Bruce Evans), the smug and self-satisfied town banker; Bob Hale (George Lewis), who became a soda jerker; and Wallace Kishler (Doug McMullen), who wanted to be an artist and was reduced to scrawling drawings in bar-rooms.

BACK DOOR TO HEAVEN

FADE IN:

LONG SHOT—EXTERIOR SCHOOL HOUSE—DAY

CUT TO:

MEDIUM SHOT—EXTERIOR SCHOOL HOUSE

There are automobiles in the foreground, which Charley Smith has furnished for the classmates. The classmates stand there staring at the little school house without saying a word. Then, led by BOB HALE, they enter.

CUT TO:

FULL SHOT—INTERIOR SCHOOL HOUSE

The classmates enter. It is just as it was when they left it. A buffet table has been arranged, and one of CHARLEY's servants is there in charge. There is a punch-bowl, sandwiches, and that sort of thing. The little old-fashioned piano remains in the corner. Nothing is said until BOB HALE breaks it.

HALE: Well, here we are—right back where we started from.

(They look at him. Now since they are grown, the little desks seem even smaller than ever.)

KISHLER *(standing over desk)*: This is where I used to sit.

HALE: Well, it's easy for you to remember—you've got your initials carved all over it. This is my desk here. And, boy, did I suffer in that seat! Miss Williams used to ask the darndest questions.

CAROL: But she was always sweet about it, don't you think?

HALE: Sure she was.

KISHLER: Don't say anything about Miss Williams.

CAROL: Didn't she look sweet last night?

HALE: I was only kidding. Where did you sit, John?

SHELLEY: Right there.

KISHLER: No, you didn't, did you?

SHELLEY: Yes, that's where I sat all right. And Carol's desk is *this* one.

HALE: Gee, what a memory.

KISHLER: You sure of that, John?

SHELLEY: Yes, I'm sure of it. I know, because I sat here . . . (*He skips one desk.*) Carol sat here . . . (*Now indicating the desk between the two pointed out.*) . . . and —well, I guess we all know who sat there.

KISHLER: Frankie.

HALE: Frankie.

CAROL: Frankie.

HALE (*breaks it, crossing over to the wall—pointing to a hook on the wall*): Bet you can't tell me what this was for.

KISHLER: No, I can't.

SHELLEY: I remember—and you do, too, Carol—don't you?

CAROL: Yes, that's where Miss Williams used to hang her little jacket and hat every day. (*Changing.*) Why do they have to keep her from working?

KISHLER: I don't know. She looked just the same to me last night, and I'll bet she could still ask those questions.

HALE: Well, can't Charley do something about that?

CAROL: I don't know whether he can or not—but he isn't. Frankie tried to fix that up.

(*They move to a blackboard.*)

HALE: Remember this spot? I've taken many a beating here.

KISHLER: Those were the good old days.

HALE: You can have them.

(*They go over to the platform.*)

SHELLEY: Well, this is where I used to suffer. I was always making speeches—reciting something—

CHORUS (*ad lib.*): And good ones, too, John. You weren't bad.

SHELLEY: No, I wasn't bad till I got a chance to make a big speech that might have helped somebody—and then I failed.

CUT TO:

MEDIUM SHOT NEAR DOOR

CHARLEY SMITH *enters. He is bubbling over with energy and happiness. He has some presents, and goes right into his best Rotarian manner.*

CHARLEY: Well, well—so I'm a little late. How are you all? How does the old place look—not much change, eh? I'd 'a been here sooner, but I had a little business at the bank. You know how those things go. Hello, Carol—John—Wallace. Hello, there, Bob. Did you sleep well?

HALE: Yeah, fine.

CHARLEY: Well, I just arranged a few refreshments. (*To the servant.*) George, you needn't wait any longer. We can take care of ourselves. Everything set? That's fine.

(*In contrast to CHARLEY's mood, the others are unable to enter into the spirit of things so CHARLEY carries on.*)

Yes, I want you all to take a good look at this place. We're going to tear it down next week. Just can't keep it any longer. Too much development—real estate. Has Miss Williams shown up yet?

SHELLEY: No, Charley, Miss Williams isn't here yet.

CHARLEY: Well, she'll be along all right. And I'll bet you I can tell you the first thing she does.

KISHLER: What?

CHARLEY: Well, what did we always used to do on Friday afternoon the first thing?

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—GROUP

(*They could remember, but they say nothing.*)

BACK TO CHARLEY

CHARLEY: You see, I got you stuck already. We used to sing. Right?

GROUP: Yes, that's right.

CHARLEY (*as he moves toward them*): I'd ask you to sit down, but you can't sit down in those desks any more, can you? I don't know whether the desks have grown smaller or you've gotten bigger. Ha, ha, ha.

CAMERA CARRIES CHARLEY TO THE WINDOW

CHARLEY: You see out there. Over there where the duck pond is now, we're going to build a swell golf course. Plans are all drawn up and everything. And any time any of you come back to this town, I want you to know you're my guests. You can play golf there any time you want to.

CAMERA SWINGS HIM OVER TO ANOTHER WINDOW

CHARLEY (*continues*): Now over here on this side—it's not set yet, you understand—but we're planning to build a new armory—got quite a few of the National Guard in town now, you know. (*Continuing.*) And the way it all turns out, there just isn't room for our little school house any more. But, as you might say, that's life, isn't it? Right Carol?

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—CAROL

CAROL: Yes, that's life, I guess, Charley.

BACK TO CHARLEY

CHARLEY: Say, what's the matter? I think we all need a little drink. Suppose we have a little drink while we're waiting for Miss Williams. (*He moves toward punch-bowl and starts dishing out drinks.*) And don't think that's lemonade. I had George put plenty of my best stuff in it.

CUT TO:

GROUP SHOT AT PUNCH-BOWL (*Each one has a glass in his hand.*)

CHARLEY: Well, how about a toast befitting the occasion?

Carol, you seem very quiet—suppose you make the toast.

CAROL (*very simply*): Well, this is a strange toast, but here it goes. (*They all lift their glasses expectantly as CAROL says*): Here's to Frankie.

CUT TO:

A MOTOR CAR ROARING DOWN ROAD

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

PURSUIT POLICE CARS

(*Wheeling up in front of country gasoline station—two policemen get out.*)

POLICEMAN: Have you seen . . . ?

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

SAME CAR WE SAW AT FIRST

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—FRANKIE

(*Driving it madly.*)

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

PURSUIT CARS ROARING ALONG

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR SCHOOL HOUSE

(*The place is now rather filled up. There are some town visitors, MRS. CHARLES SMITH is there and MISS WILLIAMS has arrived.*)

CHARLEY (*rolling in catnip—presiding*): Of course, on such a happy occasion, it is very regrettable that one of our classmates should be missing, and I can understand just how we all feel about him. But, after all, what could we expect? I tried to help him. It has only been a short time since he called on me at the bank—I offered to help him get work—I even offered him money—but he refused. (*He turns laughingly to a group at his side, including MISS WILLIAMS, MRS. SMITH and others.*) You know, I might have got killed, or robbed, or something. I showed him all around the bank—told him just how everything

worked. (*Back to group.*) I am deeply sorry, indeed, but this is an occasion—of gaiety—it's for fun—it's a reunion—it's for *you*—and I want you to enter into the spirit of things. Carol, you've been in the theatre—will you sing or dance for us, just like you used to?

(CAROL rises from her chair—not from her desk—and walks to the platform near CHARLEY. There is applause because they expect some entertainment.)

CAROL: I'm afraid you must excuse me, Charley. There's really nothing that I can do. But I'd like to ask you a question.

CHARLEY: Go right ahead. Fire away, Carol.

CAROL: Did you try to help Frankie?

CHARLEY (*surprised—stammering*): Why . . . Why . . . yes, I did.

CAROL (*quietly*): Just what did you do?

CHARLEY (*evasively and blustering*): Well, I think that's beside the point. I've told you what I did for him—and, after all, I think he deserves everything that he got. What did he do? He stole—he was in the reformatory—he was in prison—he was offered help—he committed murder—he refused to be a law-abiding citizen. (*Now getting hot under the collar.*) And I don't see any point in our worrying any longer about Frankie Rogers.

(*Bang! A door is pushed open and a door is slammed shut, and standing there is a flaming fugitive with a gun in his hand—and he is FRANKIE. For a moment he is ready to shoot. Then he is amazed to see these people. Then he recognizes them. And now as he looks at each of them and realizes what is happening, he becomes no longer the fugitive. As he looks into the faces of CAROL, JOHN SHELLEY, CHARLEY KISHLER, and MISS WILLIAMS, he pushes back the years and sees the only happiness that was ever his. As his gun slides into his pocket, FRANKIE speaks. All he says is:*)

FRANKIE: Gee . . .

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—CHARLEY

(He is terrified.)

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—CAROL

(She is amazed.)

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—JOHN SHELLEY

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—BOB HALE

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—WALLACE KISHLER

CUT TO:

A MONTAGE OF CLOSE SHOTS

(Revealing their surprise.)

CUT TO:

FULL SHOT—SCHOOL HOUSE

(FRANKIE walks away from the door, crosses to CAROL.)

FRANKIE: Hello, Carol. Hello, Charley. And Bob! *(He crosses to BOB HALE.)* And Kishler!

(JOHN SHELLEY crosses to FRANKIE.)

FRANKIE: Hello, John!

CUT TO:

GROUP SHOT

FRANKIE: Gee, it's nice, seein' all of you here.

SHELLEY: It's a reunion. Did you see Miss Williams over there?

FRANKIE: Where? *(He crosses over to MISS WILLIAMS.)* I'm glad to see you, Miss Williams. Did they give you that job back?

MISS WILLIAMS: Why, that doesn't matter, Frankie. How did you manage to come here?

FRANKIE: Well, I guess you all know I been in a little trouble. But them guys up there in stir ain't such a bad

lot. I told them about this little party—that you all were giving down here—and they said I could come down here for a few minutes—but I can't stay long. I gotta get right back. You all understand, don't you? (*He leaves* MISS WILLIAMS, *crosses to* KISHLER *and* HALE.) How you fellows been gettin' on?

(*They lie to him.*)

HALE: Fine, Frankie—fine.

KISHLER: Been doing great, Frankie—great—and I'm glad to see you.

FRANKIE: Good. (*Crosses to* CHARLEY.) No need askin' you how you're gettin' along, Charley. You look swell.

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—CHARLEY

(*He is scared to death.*)

CHARLEY: Yes, Frankie, yes. Sorry you can't stay, Frankie. (*He doesn't mean it, because he realizes FRANKIE is an escaped convict, and the place with him in it might become a target.*)

FRANKIE: Yeah, I'm sorry I can't stay, too. (*Crosses to* SHELLEY.) But before I go, I want you all to know that this guy's been a pal of mine—come all the way from Illinois to help me beat rap—and made a swell speech too—the same speech he made here one afternoon—a long time ago. So long, John. (*He sees* CAROL—*almost whispers.*) Good bye, Carol. (*Crosses to the door.*) Well, I guess there's not much more to say—it was swell seein' you all—wish you a lot of luck.

CAROL (*crosses into scene quickly*): Frankie, where are you going?

FRANKIE (*just as in first school house scene*): I don't know.

CHARLEY (*frightened stiff—trying to brush FRANKIE out of the room*): Well, thanks, Frankie, for coming along. I know you can't stay. We won't keep you any longer—but we know how it is.

CAROL: Yes, I know how it is—and you know how it is, too. You're nothing but—you're nothing but—an adding machine—like they have in your bank. You condemn Frankie for being a criminal. Did you ever think about yourself? Did you ever care about what caused Frankie to get in trouble? No—all you ever cared about was money—subdivisions, money, position. Your own wife told me last night that getting us back here was nothing but a publicity stunt. Don't you think that's fine, bringing us all back here to parade yourself in front of us? You know we never made a dime. You know we're all broke—and that wouldn't be so bad, but it's the way *you* look at it.

CHARLEY: Carol—you mustn't—Carol!

SHELLEY (*quickly*): She's upset, Charley—don't blame her.

CAROL: No, I'm not upset. Here's a boy (*indicating SHELLEY*) who came all the way from Illinois to try to help Frankie. What did you do for him?—What did any of the rest of us do for him?—I'll tell you what we did—*nothing!* (*Now at the top.*) And I'll tell you another thing—I hate what you stand for—and I hate *you!*
(*She breaks down.*)

(*Sirens are heard faintly in the distance.*)

FRANKIE (*putting his arm around CAROL*): No, no, Carol—no, no. You're wrong. (*Only to CAROL, but in a voice that can be heard by the others in the room.*) You mustn't hate anybody. That's wrong. I used to hate people too. That's easy, but it's not right. There was a guy in stir that beat me with a rubber hose. I used to hate him—and I saw him go down one noon after a guy making a break dropped a slug of lead in him—he dropped at my feet. I saw a look in his eyes that took all the hate out of me forever—and I ran to get a tin cup of water for him—and I brought it back to him—but he didn't live to drink it—and he died. Look—Carol—Charley's all right. We're all, all right, and I'm glad you're all gettin' along so well

—and I know you've all done the best you could. Maybe I did too—I don't know.

(Sirens are heard again faintly. FRANKIE hears them.)

FRANKIE: I gotta go now. Tell Charley you're sorry. Go on, or I won't be happy.

CAROL *(hardly audible)*: I'm sorry.

FRANKIE *(crosses to MISS WILLIAMS)*: Good bye, Miss Williams. I know Charley will get that job back for you. So long, Charley. So long, gang. So long.

(And out the door he goes.)

(For a moment the assemblage is silent. SHELLEY leads CAROL back to her chair.)

CHARLEY *(a different man, awkwardly)*: Miss Williams, we were saying before you came that probably the first thing you'd let us do was . . .

MISS WILLIAMS: I know—just what we do every Friday afternoon—is that it, Charley?

CHARLEY: Yes.

(MISS WILLIAMS has not dismissed just what has gone ahead. Instead, with the air of one conducting a funeral service, she crosses to the little desk and says to the classmates:)

MISS WILLIAMS: I think you'll still find the song books in your desks. *(To CHARLEY.)* Won't they, Charley?

CHARLEY: Yes, I've arranged all that.

(The "children" cross to the desks, dig into the little desks and pull out song books.)

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—JOHN SHELLEY

(As he reaches into his desk, he comes out with a song book and with a gun—FRANKIE'S gun. FRANKIE was unwilling to kill.)

CUT TO:

FULL SHOT—SCHOOL ROOM

(Outside cars are heard roaring by. A fusillade of shots is heard.)

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—CAROL

(She is terrified.)

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—HALE

CLOSE SHOT—SHELLEY—KISHLER

CLOSE SHOT—CHARLEY

(He crosses to the window quickly. He sees something.)

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—MISS WILLIAMS

MISS WILLIAMS: Charles, will you please close those windows? What is it? The duck pond?

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—CHARLEY

(He is a pasty-green.)

CHARLEY: Yes, Miss Williams. *(Haltingly.)* It's—just—some hunters.

CUT TO:

CAROL AND JOHN SHELLEY

(They are watching him.)

CUT TO:

FULL SHOT

MISS WILLIAMS *(alone, begins to sing)*: "My Country 'tis of thee . . ."

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—CHARLEY

CHARLEY *(with a great effort he joins in)*: "Sweet land of liberty . . ."

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT—HALE, SHELLEY, KISHLER, CAROL

(They cannot sing. JOHN SHELLEY puts his arm around CAROL, and we hear:)

(Voices of CHARLEY and MISS WILLIAMS:)

"Of thee I sing . . ."

FADE OUT



FILM SEQUENCE

FRONTIER FILMS'
PRODUCTION NO. 5

(Temporary Working Title)

A feature film, now in production, dramatizing the
American heritage of freedom, largely based
on the findings of the LaFollette-
Thomas Civil Liberties
Committee

PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY
PAUL STRAND, LEO HURWITZ

SCRIPT BY
DAVID WOLF, LEO HURWITZ,
PAUL STRAND

ACTION DIRECTED BY
WILLIAM WATTS, ALFRED SAXE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL STRAND

EDITING BY LEO HURWITZ

PRODUCTION MANAGER, GEORGE JACOBSON

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CHARACTERS

GROCER

THUG

CHILD

FILM SEQUENCE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

At its best, a shooting script can scarcely be easy reading, for it is to the director what a blueprint is to an architect. Between the words and the film, as between the ruled lines and the building, there is that vast change from the medium used for planning, to the one in which the final object is created.

With this in mind, there are, however, certain interesting elements in this shooting script, an awareness of which may enrich the seeing of the film when it is released. Chief among these is the minuteness with which each scene is analyzed and broken down into many shots. This means a much more expressive use of the camera, utilizing angles and image sizes as richly as possible to dramatize the screen space. To a great extent this functionally creative use of the camera has been permitted to languish since the advent of sound. Film makers have seemingly felt that an abundance of spoken dialogue relieved them of the need to use photography imaginatively. As a result, many contemporary films are a static mixture of film and theatre, in which the burden of carrying on the story rests largely upon the dialogue.

In this shooting script, this is not true. We find here that all the elements available to film making are used: photography, cutting techniques, dialogue, music and narration consciously used in relation to image. Frontier Films holds to the conviction that many techniques which were considerably developed in the silent days have been neglected

since the coming of sound. They are seeking to use every element useful to the film craftsman, in making this feature length dramatized documentary film. It is their experience that this full use of film craft will attain the maximum of audience impact.

PRODUCTION No. 5

SEQUENCE N—*An incident that happened in a grocery store in Tennessee. The grocer frequently donated small sums to unions and other progressive causes.*

CLOSE-UP: *Tilt up from cash register, registering one cent to face of old grocer as he drops penny into drawer. He looks up and quickly looks back to cash register, playfully concealing the fact that he has seen anything he was not supposed to see.*

CLOSE-UP: *A little girl, standing at candy counter, furtively takes balloon out of breast pocket and starts to blow it up.*

CLOSE-UP: *Grocer looks up with mock surprise, says:*

GROCCER: *Look out now! Look out. It'll break.*

Pan quickly to child puffing at the balloon.

LONG SHOT: *Grocer moves over from cash register to the counter. As the balloon grows larger he tries to peek around it, over it, under it, to catch her eye, make her laugh and so prevent her from filling the balloon with air.*

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: *Balloon and part of face of girl. With each puff the balloon gets dangerously bigger.*

SEMI-CLOSE-UP: *Balloon, large in foreground, grocer intently watching the balloon get larger. She suddenly bangs the balloon into his face. Grocer, hands covering eyes, slowly draws back in mock terror.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *Both. The balloon is near to bursting. The girl is puffing hard into balloon. The grocer's agitation is maximum. The balloon breaks. Girl and grocer laugh, back out of frame.*

Intercut into above CLOSE-UP: *Girl rocks with laughter.*

Intercut CLOSE-UP: Grocer laughs.

CLOSE-UP: Girl's little hand goes into pocket.

MEDIUM SHOT: She hands grocer her shopping list, scrawled on a piece of brown paper bag. He glances at list and beckons her to come around counter.

CLOSE-UP: Girl's shopping bag on floor near her feet. Her hand picks up bag. Pan as her feet skip around counter.

LONG SHOT: Pan as girl comes up behind grocer, marches him toward butter tub. He tries to slide out from in front of her to land a playful slap on her behind. She evades the slap, becomes attracted by . . .

MEDIUM SHOT: . . . a basket of eggs standing next to butter counter. She picks one up, fondles it carefully and places it back on the pile.

SEMI-CLOSE-UP: The ice-box. A card on the mirror reads: "Over Twenty Years On This Location." Grocer comes into frame, opens ice-box, starts to cut butter.

CLOSE-UP: Knife cuts butter with the skill of twenty years—a perfect half pound. Sound of door opening and closing. Tinkle of door-bell.

MEDIUM CLOSE-UP: Child's head in foreground leaning on counter. She watches grocer approach, put butter on scale. She turns to look at indicator.

Footsteps.

CLOSE-UP: Pointer swings to 8 ounces.

Footsteps.

CLOSE-UP: Girl watches indicator. A shadow darkens her face. She turns.

CLOSE-UP: A small crowbar drops into frame.

CLOSE-UP: Scale indicator swings suddenly from 8 ounces to end of scale—3 pounds. Pan to notched end of crowbar lies next to butter on scale. Kid bolts out of frame.

CLOSE-UP: Grocer startled turns to see . . .

CLOSE-UP: . . . young thug standing opposite him. (The thug is a henchman of the local corrupt political machine.)

Pan down from face of thug to crowbar on scale. Crowbar pushes butter deliberately toward edge of scale.

LONG SHOT: *Thug is pushing butter toward edge of scale. He starts to speak:*

THUG: We hear you have been giving your money away again. You don't seem to learn . . . this is an open shop town.

Kid backs away toward front of store. Butter gets very close to edge. Grocer makes move to catch it. Thug stops him with crowbar against grocer's chest.

SEMI-CLOSE-UP: *He shoves grocer violently against grocery shelves.*

CLOSE-UP: *Thug lifts up crowbar and swings it into . . .*

CLOSE-UP: *. . . the basket of eggs*

LONG SHOT: *Child dashes around counter into corner behind barrel of potatoes.*

THUG: If I was you . . . I'd clear out of town.

CLOSE-UP: *He grinds crowbar into eggs, and punctuates his remarks with an aimed thrust at a whole egg that lies among the cracked and broken eggs.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *Child on her knees hiding in corner, starts to turn around.*

CLOSE-UP: *Her big eyes follow movement of thug.*

LONG SHOT: *Pan from grocer, transfixed against shelves, to thug as he walks toward front of store. Thug wipes end of crowbar with rag, tosses it away. He stops to pick up a plum from a basket near the cash register.*

CLOSE-UP: *Kid, still in corner, watches thug with terrified fascination.*

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: *Thug's hand, throws down plum, picks up another.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *Thug lifts plum to his mouth, turns sharply to grocer, says:*

THUG: Pay your bills . . . and get out of business.

MEDIUM CLOSE-UP: *Grocer.*

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: *Kid watches thug.*

CLOSE-UP: *Thug bites into plum, discovers child in corner.*

He takes another plum from basket, and starts to throw:

THUG: Here, kid.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: *Thug's hand throws plum almost directly into camera.*

SEMI-CLOSE-UP: *Child trembling with fear, plum hits her on chest and falls to floor.*

LONG SHOT WITH WIDE-ANGLE LENS: *Thug swoops forward (from full figure to large close-up) to pick up plum.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *Pan as grocer moves over to see what is happening.*

SEMI-CLOSE-UP: *Plum lying on floor near legs of child. Thug's hand comes into frame, picks it up. Pan with plum as the thug offers it to her.*

THUG: Take it. It won't hurt you.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: *Child doesn't respond, stares at him.*

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: *Thug's pock marked face. He offers her plum.*

THUG: Here. Here.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP: *Girl's little hand grips dress tightly.*

SEMI-CLOSE-UP: *Thug offers her plum. Her faces twitches with fear. Suddenly he pushes plum to her mouth. She turns away with a cry.*

SEMI-CLOSE-UP: *Grocer comes into frame sharply around cash register:*

GROCER: Let that child alone.

MEDIUM SHOT: *Thug's head in foreground. Thug swings around, and smashing crowbar into counter, stops the grocer in his tracks.*

MEDIUM SHOT: *Child tries to run to grocer. Thug stops her with other hand, turns toward her.*

CLOSE-UP: *Thug slowly turns to camera, says:*

THUG: Your friend don't live here any more.

He shoves her roughly into corner, then he starts to rise, head goes out of frame.

CLOSE-UP: *Thug's legs. He lifts himself up with crowbar.
Pan on his legs, crowbar hanging at side, as he walks.
Stops near grocer, says:*

THUG: *... and be out of Memphis by Thursday.*

Camera holds on crowbar as he walks to door.

Intercut in above flash CLOSE-UP: *Old fashioned door-bell swings.*

Tinkle of bell.

MEDIUM SHOT: *Grocer stands transfixed.*

Bell tinkle.

LONG SHOT: *Child bolts out of corner toward grocer.*

Bell tinkle (fainter).

SEMI-CLOSE-UP: *Child runs to grocer, embraces him, starts to cry. Grocer watches thug walk down street.*

Bell tinkle fades out.

LONG SHOT (*through window*): *Traffic goes by in the street.*

LONG SHOT: *Grocer and child alone in big store. Grocer relaxes, starts to soothe sobbing child.*

FADEOUT



DRAMA

JACOB COMES HOME

BY WILLIAM KOZLENKO

(FOR LEONORE)

Copyright December 1938 by William Kozlenko.

CHARACTERS

LIESE BRAUN, DAUGHTER

MAGDA BRAUN, HER MOTHER

JOSEPH BRAUN, GRANDFATHER

HULDA, HIS DAUGHTER

RUDOLPH HUBER, JACOB'S FRIEND

TIME: *Present*

PLACE: *Berlin, Germany*

JACOB COMES HOME

SCENE: *It is evening. LIESE BRAUN, a girl in her early twenties, is standing by the window, peering out from behind the drawn portieres. The room is dimly lit, as if darkness were far more welcome than light. A candelabra with three flickering candles stands on the table. Her family sits around the table.*

(NOTE: Long silences between speeches, like rests in music.)

MAGDA: Any sign yet, Liese?

LIESE: No, mother, not yet.

MAGDA: What can be keeping him?

HULDA: How can you see when the street is so dark?

JOSEPH: She has young eyes, Hulda, and her senses have been sharpened by fear.

HULDA: I know, father, but, still . . . when all the lights are turned off . . .

LIESE: Faces are hard to recognize—but I can make out the figures . . .

HULDA: Even without the uniforms?

LIESE: Both.

MAGDA: Why should I tremble so with fright?

JOSEPH: Do we know else but fear and terror these days?

MAGDA: It's like a chill . . .

RUDOLF: When I was taken by the . . . when I left . . . they were still searching houses. Have they ceased, already?

LIESE: There are still many Jews left in Germany, Rudolf.

JOSEPH: Too many for the—

LIESE (*frightened*): Grandfather, please . . .

JOSEPH: Who can hear me, child? We are among friends.

RUDOLPH: Joseph, please, never dare say that word.

JOSEPH: Even here—in my own house?

LIESE: Yes—even here.

HULDA: You frighten me. I must go.

JOSEPH: Of what are you frightened, Hulda? A word?

HULDA: Of that word, father, . . . of that word.

JOSEPH: This is my house. I was born here. Walls and the lips of friends do not betray—

LIESE: Not even walls. They listen and when they—they come . . . they speak.

MAGDA: I am frightened. I don't know why; but I'm frightened.

HULDA: I must leave. My children are alone in the house.

JOSEPH: Stay, Hulda. We are waiting . . .

MAGDA: Rudolf, please remember . . . Think hard . . . Are you sure it's today?

RUDOLF: That's what I heard. Magda, would I lie to you?

MAGDA: You wouldn't, but they—

RUDOLF: They said on Friday your Jacob can go home.

HULDA: Which Friday?

RUDOLF: Today. I heard the news myself on Monday.

MAGDA: Why didn't they release Jacob on Monday, too?

JOSEPH: Monday is yesterday. Friday is today. We are waiting for today.

MAGDA: Did they say when today?

RUDOLF: Would they say such a thing? Friday, that's all.

LIESE: But he isn't here yet.

JOSEPH: We must wait.

MAGDA: How can we be sure? It may have been a lie.

RUDOLF: There were two hundred men in the prison . . . from this neighborhood.

JOSEPH: All Jews?

RUDOLF: Not all.

HULDA: How many?

RUDOLF: About a hundred: young and old. The warden called off a list of names. Ten names on Monday . . . My name was in that. Ten names on Tuesday—ten names on Wednesday . . . and so on. And in the ten names for Friday . . . he called out Jacob Braun.

MAGDA: Our Jacob?

RUDOLF: Jacob Braun from Wiengasse.

HULDA: That's our Jacob.

MAGDA: Did you see him?

RUDOLF: He was standing beside me.

MAGDA: What did he do?

RUDOLF: He began to weep.

LIESE: Did my father say anything?

RUDOLF: He wasn't allowed to speak.

MAGDA: And then . . . ?

RUDOLF: But, Magda, I told you all this, already.

MAGDA: I know, Rudolf, I know. Please forgive me. Tell me again . . . again . . .

RUDOLF: He clutched my hand.

MAGDA: Warmly?

RUDOLF: As a friend would clutch a friend's hand.

MAGDA: Was he happy that you were leaving?

RUDOLF: Very happy. He said I should come to see you and tell you—

MAGDA: And then?

RUDOLF: He whispered . . .

LIESE: No one saw him?

RUDOLF: No one. His breath brushed my ear. On Friday I shall be home, he said, home . . .

MAGDA: He said it just that way? Home?

RUDOLF: He was choking . . . the tears stuck in his throat . . . If they saw him cry, they'd—

MAGDA: And then, Rudolf, then? Tell me.

RUDOLF: The Monday prisoners were discharged.

LIESE: Is that when you last saw him?

RUDOLF: He was standing off, by himself, trying to smile.
He wanted to cry, but he smiled. He waved me a greeting
and then they took him away.

HULDA: And now you are here waiting for him.

LIESE: They let you go out quietly? They said or did
nothing?

RUDOLF: They said little and did much.

JOSEPH: I hear stories . . . Are they true?

RUDOLF: True.

JOSEPH: What?

RUDOLF: They exercise what they call small formalities to
discourage opposition when you leave.

MAGDA: Did Jacob always weep? Did he always choke
with tears in his throat?

RUDOLF: He never smiled.

JOSEPH: Formalities, Rudolf?

RUDOLF: Yes. Liese, is anybody coming this way?

LIESE: The street is empty.

JOSEPH: You can speak.

HULDA: How can you see when it's so dark?

RUDOLF: They took me into a small room . . . four men
with steel whips stood with feet apart . . . two stripped me
naked . . . (*He stops.*)

HULDA: They beat you?

RUDOLF (*terror-stricken*): Oh, God! I am afraid! Even
here! I am afraid!

JOSEPH: Say it softly, my son, very softly . . . as if you
were saying it to yourself.

RUDOLF: Such fear and terror they bring into a man's heart.

JOSEPH: Speak, Rudolf, speak . . . do not be afraid.

RUDOLF: The flesh remembers—

JOSEPH: Whisper it—

RUDOLF: . . . and cries out in pain even here . . . even
here . . .

JOSEPH: Whisper it, as Jacob brushed your ear with a whisper.

RUDOLF: I can't! I can't!

JOSEPH: Courage, Rudolf. Give your thoughts a voice and—

RUDOLF (*jumping up*): Oh, merciful God! To have lived through such suffering! To be thrown bleeding dead to the ground! Not to be able to shriek out: What have I done? What have I done? Are you living men that you stand unmoved by a living man's pain? Are you living men that you stand unshaken by a living man's cries? God, what is this beast that came from a father and mother and still calls itself—a Man! Who is this judge that proclaims: You, Jew, shall die! You, Jew, shall live!

JOSEPH: There are no words in a man's heart that can appease the burning pain in his body. You have suffered in your helplessness and we have suffered in ours. Because your body and your spirit have felt torture, does that mean that we, who have not yet been tortured, feel this torture the less? Must we be whipped into bleeding shreds to learn the pain a body can endure? Is there not a greater pain in waiting and not knowing who will be next? Our hearts throb in our chests like knuckles beating frantically on a door. And unspoken voices shriek in our ears: It's your turn now! Your turn! And if a day passes that they are not at our doors, there is the dread of the morrow, when the knuckles will be on the hand of a man, and the voice the voice of torture come to make us dead!

RUDOLF: Where is the fury of this righteous world that allows living flesh to be so degraded?

JOSEPH: No, Rudolf, not the fury of a righteous world! But the righteousness of fury!

MAGDA: And Jacob? Must he, too—

RUDOLF: None is spared. The strong may survive. But the weak will perish.

MAGDA: But if they see he is sick and kind, would they still—

RUDOLF: Are they physicians that they seek to cure the ill? If you are strong, they make you weak. If you walk erect, they make you lame. If you love life, they make you want death. And if you refuse to die—

MAGDA: They—?

RUDOLF: —make you dead!

LIESE: Shshsh . . . quiet . . . I see two men coming down the street.

MAGDA: Two?

HULDA: Are they in uniform?

LIESE: They're still too far away. I can't make out.

MAGDA: Are they walking slowly or—

LIESE: Slowly.

MAGDA: One must be Jacob! Oh, God, Jacob has come home! Jacob has returned to us—alive!

JOSEPH: Are they approaching closer?

LIESE: Yes . . . but they do not speak to each other.

JOSEPH: They are afraid of the wind that would catch their words and drop them on hostile ears.

HULDA: Who can the other man be?

RUDOLF: Perhaps a friend who has also been befriended.

LIESE: One is tall, the other short.

JOSEPH: The tall man must be Jacob.

MAGDA: There will be happiness in another home tonight.

HULDA: They must also be sitting like us, or standing by the window, watching and waiting . . .

MAGDA: Where are they now?

LIESE: Crossing the street.

JOSEPH: If my eyes were not so dim, I would stand here and count the number of steps that would bring Jacob to this door.

RUDOLF: I would do it; but I dare not show my face at the window.

LIESE: I would say they are about fifty feet away . . .

HULDA: You still can't see their faces?

LIESE: They have hats pulled down low.

JOSEPH: They must either be ashamed or afraid.

RUDOLF: If they are Jews they are afraid. If—

LIESE: Rudolf, quiet!

MAGDA: Jacob will soon be here. Do I look well? Are my eyes red?

JOSEPH: He will welcome you as you are.

MAGDA: No, no, I must look my best! He is returning home. When he opens the door, let us start to sing . . .

RUDOLF: Sing softly or they will think we have feasted on wine.

JOSEPH: Or that we are too happy.

MAGDA: I *am* happy. Why should I deny it? Jacob has returned home!

JOSEPH: He must not speak of his suffering. His silence will be more eloquent. But we—we must talk of everything else but the things that have given him so much pain.

RUDOLF: He will look at you with strange, fearful eyes—

MAGDA: He will be home!

RUDOLF: There will be dread in them . . . words will falter on his tongue . . .

LIESE: We promise not to stare at him.

RUDOLF: Each here will ask himself: Can this be the same living Jacob who left this house ten days ago?

JOSEPH: He will return as if he had arisen from the grave.

RUDOLF: Remember to let your eyes tell lies. When he looks into them, let him not see what you see.

LIESE: We will laugh and our eyes will laugh with us!

MAGDA: He will be home! That's all I know! That's all I care!

RUDOLF: But you must make him smile! Must make him laugh! Must—

LIESE: Softer, Rudolf. They are coming toward the house.

RUDOLF: —make him forget even for an hour.

JOSEPH: The hour will begin in a moment.

LIESE: They are nearer . . .

MAGDA: Sixty more seconds and we shall hear his step . . .

LIESE: They are looking around.

MAGDA: Strangers look around. Jacob is no stranger.

RUDOLF: It must be—

LIESE: Shshsh . . .

HULDA: If the bell should suddenly ring . . .

LIESE: Why couldn't I make out the faces?

HULDA: —I would faint.

RUDOLF: Your eyes must be wet, Liese.

HULDA: How can you see when the night is so dark?

JOSEPH: He is walking up the stairs . . . step by step . . .

RUDOLF: They walk very slowly after they come back.

MAGDA: Now he's on the first landing . . .

JOSEPH: He has stopped to catch his breath.

MAGDA: Now he is turning . . .

HULDA: Is there a light in the hallway?

JOSEPH: One more flight and—

MAGDA: Shshsh . . .

(They sit there paralyzed. Waiting, waiting: a great deep silence is being ticked away by unheard seconds. Ten seconds . . . fifteen seconds go by. Quick patter of time as five hearts in the same room beat twice as fast. No knock. No bell. Suddenly from the other room comes a crash of glass, as if a rock had been hurled through the window.)

HULDA (*jumping up*): My God!

JOSEPH (*stands up*): Of the two, neither was Jacob. (*He starts to walk slowly into the other room.*)

MAGDA: Father, father, don't go in!

JOSEPH: Of what are you afraid: a dead stone?

RUDOLF: Of the living hand that threw it.

HULDA: I am frightened! I must go! (JOSEPH *goes into the other room.*)

LIESE (*almost in tears*): If there was only a little bit more light. I could have seen; and seen right; would not have hoped.

JOSEPH (*returning with the rock in his hand*): Once, this may have been part of a man; a head, perhaps, or a heart . . .

RUDOLF: Our country beats with the tread of uniformed men who have hearts such as this . . .

JOSEPH: If Isaiah were living, he would have said as he said when he lived: "How is the faithful city become a harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers!"

HULDA: The stone was a warning . . . First windows; then heads.

JOSEPH: No, Hulda, a symbol of how little separates this rock from the throbbing heart of a pitiless man.

LIESE: Shsh . . . I see somebody walking.

RUDOLF: Slow or fast?

LIESE: Fast.

MAGDA: It cannot be Jacob.

LIESE: He wears his hat high on his head.

JOSEPH: He is either a proud or a fearless man.

LIESE: And he's coming this way.

RUDOLF: Many men live on this street. Why hope and tremble?

JOSEPH: We shall wait.

MAGDA: I know Jacob's walk. It is slow and heavy.

LIESE: This man is looking at our house.

HULDA: Can you see his face?

LIESE: He has gone.

RUDOLF: He was not looking for us.

MAGDA: The candles have burned low, father.

JOSEPH: Within the hour they will have burned out. When

Jacob returns we will light three others. For Jacob, too, is a pious man.

(A ring. LIESE jumps away from the window. They all come together, huddling close, fear and dread on their faces.)

MAGDA: Lord in Heaven, can it be—

JOSEPH: Shall I go? *(Strong knocking on the door.)*

MAN *(voice)*: Open up!

HULDA *(whimpering)*: For whom has he come? For whom?

JOSEPH: Hulda, quiet. Show no fear.

MAN: Open up!

MAGDA *(goes to open the door)*: My name is—

MAN: Is this the Braun residence?

MAGDA: Yes.

MAN: Your name?

MAGDA: Magda Braun.

MAN: Wife—?

MAGDA: —of Jacob Braun.

MAN *(handing her a small, carefully wrapped parcel)*:
Package . . .

MAGDA: Package?

MAN: Addressed to you. Three marks charge, please.

MAGDA: Three—

MAN: For the ashes of your husband!

MAGDA: My . . . !

JOSEPH *(bending his head; softly)*: Jacob has come home . . .

MAGDA *(dazed, digs into her dress pocket for the money, as)*

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY

For reading purposes only! To produce this play write to the author in care of *The One Act Play Magazine* for details, 112 West 42nd Street, New York.

DRAMA

WHY I AM A BACHELOR

A Comedy in Four Scenes

BY CONRAD SEILER

CHARACTERS

THE LECTURER

ALGERNON

HENRIETTA

WHY I AM A BACHELOR

THE LECTURER, *immaculately dressed, appears centre before the curtain with a pointer in his hand.*

THE LECTURER: Ladies and gentlemen: I am here to tell you the truth. I am a bachelor. I have always been a bachelor. I always will be one. Many of my married friends have tried to persuade me to marry. I have always refused, and I always will refuse. I see that some people in the audience are smiling in a knowing way. Smile on, friends. The joke is not on me.

Now, don't misunderstand: I am a bachelor through inclination, not necessity. (*To the electrician.*) Spot-light, please. Thank you. Kindly observe, ladies and gentlemen, I am not without personal charms. (*He turns completely round, his arms extended like a modiste's model.*) I always impress women; I can't help it. It's my nature. Indeed, hundreds, I may say, thousands, of delightful females—witty, young and beautiful—thousands of them have insisted on making my acquaintance. A number of the most intelligent even proposed to me. But, of course, I turned them all down. Whenever I meet a young woman, I talk to her, I am kind to her, but when the crisis comes, my answer is always an emphatic, "No!"

My friends, I have been giving these sermons throughout the civilized world. I have received thousands of letters from unhappy husbands, expressing the fervent wish that they had heard me sooner. I have received hundreds of letters from engaged couples, who, upon hearing me speak, broke their engagements to follow my example. I

have also received a few letters from indignant wives, threatening me with—but we need not go into that. The point is, my work is having results. But if I had only saved *one* innocent soul from jumping into the heaving waters of matrimony, I should feel that my labors were not in vain. (*He taps twice on the floor with his pointer; then looks offstage.*) All right, children. I'm ready.

(*A young man and a young woman enter and nonchalantly stand beside THE LECTURER, facing the audience. THE LECTURER continues without pausing.*)

THE LECTURER: Ladies and gentlemen, though not married myself, I have been a serious student of married life for many years. I may say, I am an expert on marriage. You could hardly expect a married man to be honest about his condition, could you? Certainly not. He wouldn't dare. But I can view the whole problem of marriage, dispassionately and scientifically, from the lofty mountain top of bachelorhood. I have studied marriage in all its aspects—and, believe me, it has many. Now, the thing that always strikes me very forcibly is the great contrast between courtship days and married life, between the before and the after. And, in this connection, permit me, ladies and gentlemen, to introduce to you my friends, Algernon and Henrietta.

ALGERNON AND HENRIETTA (*in unison; bowing to the audience*): How do you do?

THE LECTURER: Both, as you see, are charming young people. Turn round, my dears. (*They slowly turn with arms extended.*) I have selected them because they are representative of their age and sex. Their experience is typical of the experience of most unthinking young couples—and, I regret to say, most young couples are unthinking. With their assistance, I have prepared a series of living sermons, taken from their own lives. Every scene, every

word, every action, has been lived by them. They will solemnly swear to the truth of my statement.

ALGERNON AND HENRIETTA (*in unison; right hand raised*):
We swear!

THE LECTURER: These living sermons, my friends, will make perfectly clear to you: Why I Am a Bachelor. (*To the electrician.*) Lights out, please. (*He taps twice with his pointer. The lights go out. Only THE LECTURER'S face is seen.*) Curtain! (*Business with pointer. The curtain obediently parts in the darkness.*) Lights on! That's enough. (*The stage lights appear gradually, stopping on cue.*) (*The scene is the façade of a small cottage. There is a door centre with three brick steps leading up to it. Two potted firs stand near the door, one at either side. There are two windows with drawn blinds.*)

(ALGERNON and HENRIETTA have disappeared. THE LECTURER is near proscenium right. He steps into the scene.)

THE LECTURER (*pointing*): This, ladies and gentlemen, is Henrietta's house—charming place, home of a charming girl. This is the front door; these steps leading up to the door; and this the walk leading up to the steps. It is a summer night—rather late. There is a full moon. (*He taps twice with the pointer. The moon appears, throwing a shaft of light against the door.*) And you can hear a mocking bird. (*Business. The bird is heard offstage.*) Very pretty. In fact, it is just one of those soft, balmy occasions which are so dangerous to the young. Algernon is driving Henrietta home from a dance in the car he has borrowed from his father, without father's permission. The car approaches. (*Business. The whirring of a motor is heard.*) The car stops. (*Business. There is a sudden cessation of noise.*) Algernon is helping Henrietta to get out—very tenderly, of course. You see, they are engaged. They enter and speak for themselves.

(*Business with pointer. ALGERNON and HENRIETTA enter. ALGERNON has his arm round his companion's waist. They are laughing and chatting.*)

HENRIETTA: Algy! How could you?

ALGERNON: I'm in love.

HENRIETTA (*provokingly*): Well, don't you dare do it again.

ALGERNON (*his head close to hers*): Didn't you like it, Henrietta?

HENRIETTA: Oh, Algy—!

ALGERNON: What's the difference, anyway? We're going to be married next month, aren't we?

HENRIETTA: Next month! Isn't it just *too* wonderful!

ALGERNON: Most wonderful thing in the world. God, I'm happy! (*He executes a few impromptu steps to express his feelings.*)

HENRIETTA: Shh! Not so loud, Algy. It's late. You'll waken the whole neighborhood. They'll think we're drunk.

ALGERNON: I am drunk—drunk with love.

HENRIETTA (*on the steps*): Do you really love me as much as all that?

ALGERNON: Much more, Henrietta.

HENRIETTA: And you'll always love me—always?

ALGERNON: Henrietta!

HENRIETTA: Will you?

ALGERNON: Of course, dearest! How could I help it?

HENRIETTA: You'll never be unkind to me, or quarrel with me or with mother?

ALGERNON: Never — never in the whole world! Your mother's a perfect lamb, and you—why you're the sweetest, prettiest, most adorable little—

THE LECTURER (*stepping into the scene*): Just a moment—just a moment, Algy! There's something I want to explain. (*ALGERNON and HENRIETTA stop acting.*) Ladies and gentlemen, you understand, of course, that Algernon is not

really lying. As a matter of fact, he believes every word he says. Henrietta is just as sincere. It's the moon, the night, the inexperience of youth, that is putting such ideas into their heads. They don't know that "never" and "always" mean a pretty long time, especially after one's married. (*To ALGERNON and HENRIETTA.*) All right, children. Let's go.

(*He crosses again to proscenium, right.*)

(*Whenever THE LECTURER interpolates, ALGERNON and HENRIETTA stop acting and are their very natural selves. When the cue is given, as above, they continue their acting from the point where they left off.*)

HENRIETTA (*sighing happily; her head on ALGERNON's shoulder*): Isn't it a wonderful night?

ALGERNON: A night just made for love.

HENRIETTA: Look at that gorgeous moon!

(*The mocking bird sings offstage.*)

ALGERNON: She's in love with the earth, Henrietta.

HENRIETTA: Listen to that mocking bird!

ALGERNON: He's singing of love.

HENRIETTA: Everything's so perfectly lovely!

ALGERNON: That's because we're in love.

HENRIETTA (*sighing*): In love! (*After a pause.*) What time is it, Algy?

ALGERNON (*watch in hand*): Ten minutes to ten.

HENRIETTA: So late? Oh, I must leave you!

ALGERNON: Please don't go yet!

HENRIETTA: I must, Algy. Now, don't be bad. Mother will be terribly worried. I told her I'd return by nine o'clock. Good-night. I've enjoyed myself so much.

ALGERNON: Can't I come in for a while?

HENRIETTA: Oh, no, Algy! Mother's in bed. She wouldn't like it. Good-night, good-night, Algy.

ALGERNON: Good-night, my sweetheart!

(*He crushes her to him.*)

THE LECTURER (*tapping with pointer*): That's enough children. Lights out, please! (*Everything happens as THE LECTURER commands. A small spot-light illumines THE LECTURER's face.*) Just two years have passed. Algernon and Henrietta are now married. They are still living together in a little cottage, not far from Henrietta's mother, whom Henrietta loves very dearly. Algernon has a good job, and Henrietta looks after the house. Lights, please! Thank you.

(*The scene is virtually the same; only the two potted firms have been removed. ALGERNON and HENRIETTA have disappeared. THE LECTURER steps into the scene.*)

THE LECTURER (*pointing*): This is Algernon's house—charming home of a charming couple. This is the front door; these the steps leading up to the door; and this the walk leading up to the steps. It is summer night again—rather late. There's a moon. (*Business.*) And you can still hear that mocking bird. (*Business.*) Algernon is driving Henrietta home from the theatre—this time in his own car. It is their wedding anniversary, and they have been celebrating. The car approaches. (*Business. The terrific whiz and bang of a cheap motor is heard, followed by several very loud detonations.*) The car stops. Algernon and Henrietta enter.

(*He taps with his pointer, and the young couple enter. Neither ALGERNON nor HENRIETTA looks quite so trim as in the previous scene. During the two years of married life, ALGERNON has raised a miniature moustache.*)

ALGERNON: For God's sake, stop nagging, will you? You've been keeping it up since we left the theatre.

HENRIETTA: That's what you always say when you know you're in the wrong.

ALGERNON: Was it *my* fault that idiot drove into us, was it?

HENRIETTA: You were going much too fast.

ALGERNON: That's right, blame me! You always do.

(He takes a ring of keys from his pocket and goes to the door.)

HENRIETTA: I always try to be just, Algernon.

(The mocking bird begins to sing offstage.)

ALGERNON: You do like—! Where is that confounded key?
(He tries several.) Damnation! I wish somebody would strangle that bird!

HENRIETTA *(after a pause)*: Algernon, will you do me a favor?

ALGERNON: Well, what is it?

HENRIETTA: Please don't pick your teeth in the theatre again. You don't know how it embarrasses me. Didn't you see the way that young woman was looking at you? The habit is revolting, Algernon.

ALGERNON *(turning)*: My God, can't a man ever do anything that gives him pleasure?

HENRIETTA: Not if it disgusts other people.

ALGERNON: Well, other people disgust me. See here, Henrietta, I'm getting sick and tired of it. I can't do a blamed thing anymore. First it's you, and then it's your mother—

HENRIETTA: Algernon, I forbid you to speak of my mother!

ALGERNON: Well, why does she always interfere? Will you tell me that? The old cow—

HENRIETTA: Algernon!

ALGERNON: Every time, every time I do something she has to have her say. I've never in all my life seen such a—

HENRIETTA: Algernon, will you stop!

ALGERNON: No, I won't! It's the truth, and you know it.

HENRIETTA: It's nothing of the sort. Mother never says a word, not one word, except for your own good.

ALGERNON: My own good? My own—? Ha! Ha! Ha! That's rich! My own—! Ha! Ha! Ha! *(After a pause.)* Where's that damn key?

HENRIETTA *(after another pause)*: Algy! *(No response.)*
Algy!

ALGERNON: What d'you want?

HENRIETTA: Algy, are you forgetting so quickly?

ALGERNON (*turning*): What?

HENRIETTA: It's our anniversary, dear. Only two years ago—

ALGERNON: It seems like twenty to me.

HENRIETTA: Algernon!

ALGERNON: What have I done now?

HENRIETTA: Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Have you no sentiment at all?

ALGERNON: What little I had's been knocked out of me.

HENRIETTA (*dangerously*): By me, I suppose.

ALGERNON: I'm not accusing anybody. (*The door is opened.*) There! Thank God!

HENRIETTA (*her handkerchief to her eyes*): To think—after only two years—!

ALGERNON: Oh, come on, don't commence again!

HENRIETTA: That you'd ever speak to me like that!

ALGERNON: For the love of—, what have I said?

HENRIETTA: After all your promises!

ALGERNON: I didn't say anything.

HENRIETTA: No—no, you never do! I—I'm so miserable!

(*She starts to whimper in earnest.*)

ALGERNON (*crossing to her*): Oh, I apologize then. I don't know what I've done, but I apologize. Come on, Henrietta, come inside. Why should the neighbors always hear our squabbles? Come on, don't be a fool.

HENRIETTA: What—what did you call me?

ALGERNON: God almighty—!

HENRIETTA: I won't—I won't stand it! You heartless brute! I'm going home to mother!

ALGERNON: Henrietta, please—!

HENRIETTA: Don't touch me! Don't touch me! I—I hate you! Oh—Algernon!

(She bursts into tears; then pushes ALGERNON aside; enters the house, slamming the door after her.)

ALGERNON: Henrietta! *(Turning to the audience.)* Oh, damn!

THE LECTURER: Lights out, please. Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I made no comments during the last sermon. It speaks for itself. We shall now go back two years. I want you to get the contrast. Algernon and Henrietta are again in the courtship stage. Lights! *(Pointing.)* This is Henrietta's home once more. We have taken off the fourth wall to show you the breakfast nook—charming, isn't it? Table, benches, flowers, plenty of food, and Algernon and Henrietta.

(The young people, who are seated at the table, looking into each other's eyes, with hands and thoughts intertwined, rise and bow to the audience. They both seem very neatly dressed. ALGERNON is minus his moustache again.)

ALGERNON AND HENRIETTA *(in unison; sweetly)*: How do you do? *(They seat themselves; clasp hands again; look into each other's eyes, etc.)*

THE LECTURER: Henrietta's mother is out, and the dear girl has invited Algernon in for breakfast. They are both very happy. Algernon is supposed to be eating, but he really doesn't eat a great deal. Action, please!

HENRIETTA: Algy, do you really like my biscuits?

ALGERNON: I adore them. They're divine.

HENRIETTA: But you haven't eaten many, dear.

ALGERNON: I'm feeding on the love in your eyes.

HENRIETTA *(laughing)*: I'm afraid that's not very substantial.

ALGERNON: I'd prefer it to any food on earth.

THE LECTURER: Of course, he doesn't realize what he's saying.

HENRIETTA: You dear boy! (*Pause.*) Isn't being in love just *too* wonderful?

ALGERNON: The most wonderful thing I know.

HENRIETTA: Just being in love? Or just being in love with me?

ALGERNON: Henrietta, I couldn't imagine love without you.
(*He sighs. She sighs. THE LECTURER sighs. Pause.*)

HENRIETTA: Do finish your coffee, Algy. I'm afraid it's already cold.

ALGERNON: I don't want coffee. I only want you.

HENRIETTA: Don't be silly. If you don't drink, I won't marry you. (*Pause.*) Algy, tell me something.

ALGERNON: Yes, sweetheart?

HENRIETTA: Algy, do you think you'll ever fall in love with some other woman after—after we're married?

ALGERNON: Henrietta!

HENRIETTA: That's no answer.

ALGERNON: No other woman will ever exist but you!

HENRIETTA: You do say the nicest things!

ALGERNON: That's because I'm in love with you—my darling, my lovely girl, my adored one—!

(*He kisses her hand, and then looks at her again with the same beatific expression in his eyes.*)

THE LECTURER (*stepping into the scene*): Beg your pardon, Algy. Just a moment. No, don't move! Ladies and gentlemen, I want you to notice particularly the strange expression in Algernon's eyes. Now turn this way, Algy. That's it. Hold it! You'll find the same expression in the eyes of people that aren't all there. That's what love does to human beings. It destroys their reason; makes them rave about nothing at all, and gives an utterly wrong perspective to things. Love makes them mad. (*During this rather lengthy exposition, HENRIETTA, very leisurely and with the greatest sangfroid, takes out a cigarette and lights it.*) Now, Henrietta is pretty, but she isn't any prettier than

millions of other young females. You can see that; I can see it. But to Algernon Henrietta is the most beautiful, the most sublime thing in the universe. You have heard Algernon say that no other woman will ever exist but Henrietta. That's rot. But he can't see it. Love has made him blind. Henrietta is afflicted with the same disease, but she hasn't got it so badly as Algernon. For some reason women, in this respect, fare better than men. That's all. (*To ALGERNON and HENRIETTA.*) Go on, please.

HENRIETTA (*throwing cigarette aside; acting again*): Do you ever dream about the future, Algy?

ALGERNON: Do I!

HENRIETTA: Of the days when we are married?

ALGERNON: The days and the nights—

THE LECTURER: Oh, the poor fool!

HENRIETTA: And all the wonderful times we'll have together?

ALGERNON: I can think of nothing else.

HENRIETTA: Every morning I'll get up early and make breakfast for you.

ALGERNON: No, you won't. I won't let you.

HENRIETTA: Oh, yes you will, Algy, because it will make me so happy.

THE LECTURER: She really thinks it will.

ALGERNON: And then we'll sit and coo the whole day long.

HENRIETTA: That's what you'd like to do, lazy boy, but you'll have to go out and earn a living for us both.

ALGERNON: How happy I'll be to work for you, and to buy you things!

THE LECTURER: You see, he really has lost his mind.

HENRIETTA: Will that make you happy, Algy—buying things for your little wife?

ALGERNON: I'll say it will! I'll buy all the jewels and spices of Araby and lay them at your feet!

THE LECTURER: He doesn't even know where Araby is.

HENRIETTA: And why will you do all this for me, Algy?

ALGERNON: Don't pretend. You know why.

HENRIETTA: Tell me anyway. I'm dying to hear it.

(They have both risen. Their faces, over the table, are now very close.)

ALGERNON: Well, it's because I—

(Their lips touch. At that instant, THE LECTURER spoils everything.)

THE LECTURER: All right! Lights out, please! Thank you.

Two years pass again—two interminable years. It's strange how long a short time can sometimes be. Algernon and Henrietta are married once more. I warned them myself but they only laughed at me. They don't laugh now. *(Pause.)* Lights! *(He steps into the scene which is the same as the last one.)* This is Algernon's house—the breakfast nook, just as charming as the one we saw in Henrietta's home. It is breakfast time—a very pleasant morning. And here are Algernon and Henrietta.

(ALGERNON and HENRIETTA are seated as before. But now ALGERNON has a newspaper propped up before him. He wears a moustache again, and also a bath robe. HENRIETTA is in a dressing gown. Her hair is undone. Above the table is a framed motto: GOD BLESS OUR HOME. There are no flowers on the table. ALGERNON and HENRIETTA rise and bow to the audience.)

ALGERNON AND HENRIETTA *(in unison; gruffly)*: How do you do?

(They slump down to their places again, ALGERNON with his newspaper.)

THE LECTURER: All right! Action!

HENRIETTA: Oh, why don't you say something?

ALGERNON *(not looking up)*: There's nothing to say.

HENRIETTA *(after a pause)*: Algernon! *(No response.)*
Algernon!

ALGERNON: Well?

HENRIETTA: You are impossible!

ALGERNON (*looking up*): What's the matter?

HENRIETTA: You will read at the table. How many times have I told you—

ALGERNON: Henrietta, that's all conventional rubbish. Why can't I read if I want to? What's the harm. You know it's one of the few pleasures I've got now.

HENRIETTA: You wouldn't care to talk to me, of course—

ALGERNON: Do be reasonable. What should I talk about?

HENRIETTA (*ominously*): About the love and respect you have for your wife; about your kindness to her. (ALGERNON *slams down his newspaper*.) Yes, you can talk with your cronies down at the office; talk with your stenographer, I've seen you, but your wife—oh, she's not worth talking to.

ALGERNON: Henrietta, did I say that?

HENRIETTA: Everything was so different before you married me. Then you couldn't do enough for me. And now—Yesterday I had to beg you for that new hat; today you refuse to talk to me.

ALGERNON: Oh God—!

HENRIETTA: You try to hurt me whenever you can.

ALGERNON: Henrietta, I don't want to hurt anybody. Only I hate to be nagged at all the time.

HENRIETTA: Who's nagging at you? If I ask you to be ordinarily decent—

ALGERNON (*fuming*): I don't want to be decent! (*He takes up his paper again, at the same time biting hard into a biscuit. Suddenly, he claps his hand to his mouth.*) My God! (*He rises.*)

HENRIETTA (*rising*): What is it?

ALGERNON (*expectorating several teeth on the floor*): What is it! Look, will you, look! There go two good teeth, broken off on those bloody biscuits of yours! More dentist bills! God damn!

HENRIETTA: Algernon! It serves you right. You will read while eating.

ALGERNON (*shouting*): That's about all the sympathy I can expect from you! Give me those biscuits!

HENRIETTA (*taking the plate herself*): What do you want with them?

ALGERNON: What d'you think? I'm going to throw them away!

THE LECTURER: More excitement, please!

HENRIETTA (*acting up*): Algernon, don't you dare!

ALGERNON: Give me that plate!

(*He seizes the plate. HENRIETTA still holds on.*)

THE LECTURER: Louder! Louder!

ALGERNON (*very loudly*): Give me that plate!

HENRIETTA (*shouting*): Stop it! Leave go! Stop it, Algernon!

(*In the general melee, the biscuits fall to the floor with a resounding thud. The plate remains in HENRIETTA's hands.*)

HENRIETTA (*bursting into tears*): You struck me! You struck me!

ALGERNON: Oh, shut up!

THE LECTURER (*becoming excited himself*): That's it! That's the stuff!

HENRIETTA: You struck me!

ALGERNON: I did not!

HENRIETTA (*wringing her hands*): This is what it's all come to—striking a woman!

THE LECTURER: Great!

ALGERNON: Henrietta, you're crazy! I never—

HENRIETTA (*hysterically*): Now call me names—you brute, you beast, you fiend, you—!

(*She throws the biscuit plate at him. It smashes on the floor.*)

ALGERNON: Henrietta!

HENRIETTA: Get out! Get out of my sight! Get out!

(She throws more dishes at him; then takes the motto from the wall and tears it to bits.)

ALGERNON: Henrietta, calm yourself! For God's sake—!

THE LECTURER *(seeing that the part is running away with her)*: Just a moment—Henrietta!

HENRIETTA *(too immersed in her acting; screaming)*: Get out! I never want to see you again. Never! Never!! Never!!!

(More plates are smashed. She hurls the breakfast fruit at ALGERNON. Some of it flies out into the audience.)

THE LECTURER *(shouting)*: I say! Henrietta! *(Going to her.)* Don't go to extremes, old girl! We'll have to use some of those plates again! It's only play, you know! *(HENRIETTA pays no attention to him. She screams and a plate sails dangerously near THE LECTURER'S head.)* Stop it! Stop it, Henrietta! Hold her, Algy!

(ALGERNON tries, but HENRIETTA sends him spinning. In a paroxysm of rage, she suddenly pulls the table cloth away. There is a tremendous clatter.)

THE LECTURER *(shouting)*: Lights out! Quick! Curtain! Curtain! *(The lights go out. The curtain closes. HENRIETTA is still heard sobbing. THE LECTURER'S voice comes out of the darkness:)*

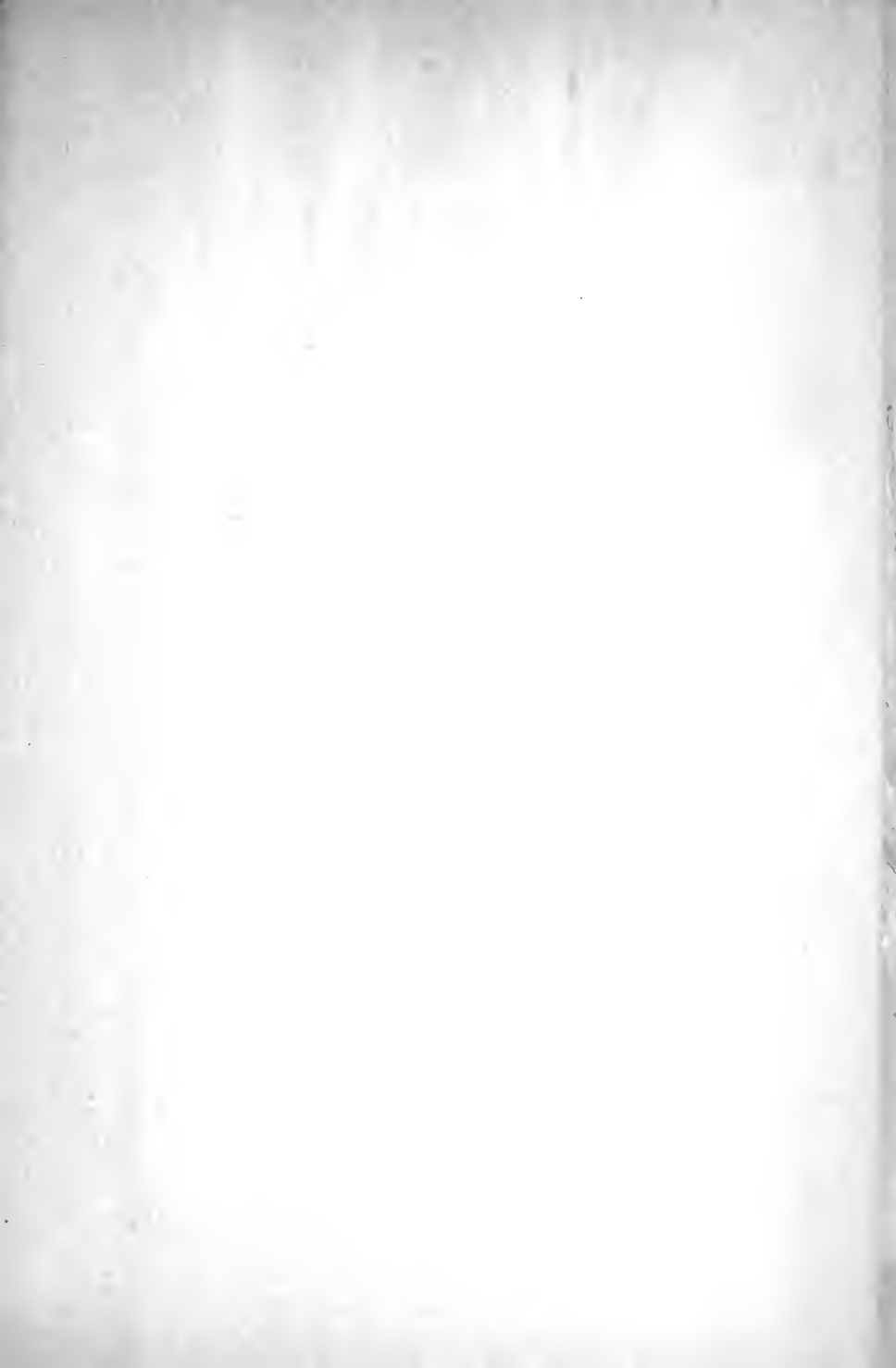
THE LECTURER: Spot-light, please! *(He appears centre, before the curtain, mopping his face with a handkerchief. On his forehead is a sizeable piece of court-plaster.)* And that, ladies and gentlemen, is Why I Am a Bachelor. I thank you.

(He bows and disappears.)

CURTAIN

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